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THE CAPTIVE HERD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FLOWERS OF THE WIND

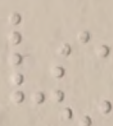
THE NEW WORLD

THE CAPTIVE HERD

BY

G. MURRAY ATKIN

AUTHOR OF "FLOWERS OF THE WIND" AND
"THE NEW WORLD"



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To
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PART ONE
THE INDIVIDUAL

As oft from storms light craft will make for shore
And hug the shelter of some safe lagoon,
Mooring their barks, wild gypsies from the sea;
So from life's tumult come there to the tribe
The nomads, who did wander far awhile,
But by the winds were driven home again
Within the fold, safe captive to the Herd.

THE CAPTIVE HERD

CHAPTER I

THE sun was shining on the white buildings of Manhattan. It had shone thus for years ere it lighted Vinevar's daily path through the streets of the metropolis to his office. It would shine years after his interesting personality would be seen in its streets no more. But when his thin figure, his parchment-like face illumined by two burning eyes, would have returned to the dust from whence they came, the effect of his projects, his power, his progress would be felt—even in Manhattan.

Vinevar drove through the crowded verisimilitude of cosmopolitan life. Isaacson was waiting for him at his office to discuss with him the carrying out of a new project. As he entered the office, he nodded to Isaacson, but although he was at least half an hour late, he made no apology. He considered himself too important to need the placid art of conciliation. He glanced at his writing table, at the pile of

letters already opened by his secretary awaiting his answer, letters representing appeals, appointments, interests, but no desires. Vinevar was a man with no desires.

"I have great need of all my time, Isaacson. What is it? In the autumn of this year a change will be effected at Washington. Wilson will go out. A new man will take his place, but whoever is nominally the mouthpiece of the cabinet, my race must be represented forcefully and by the right man. There is no luck in ministerial affairs. We leave nothing to chance. What is it about which you wish to consult me?"

He did not take a chair, but kept walking up and down as if the very echo of his own footsteps goaded him on and would not let him rest. "What advice do you want of me?" he asked solemnly.

Isaacson turned towards him as a sunflower turns to the sun, and as the petals of a sunflower reflect the brightness of its rays, Isaacson's face brightened as it turned to Vinevar.

"I have heard of a young bond dealer, a man to suit our purpose. His mother was a Russian, his father an Englishman with the usual English advantages, including a good

public school training. They emigrated to Canada, where their son was born. The son has been brought up in Canada. He was educated at a public school. Then he had one year at college. His father died. Circumstances forced him to leave college and go into a bank, from there four years ago he went into a broker's office. He has shown exceptional ability. I was in Canada, and I heard of this young man. It seemed he might be useful for our new project."

Vinevar gazed disdainfully at Isaacson. "Is his mother alive?"

"No."

"His mother is dead? He has no home ties. He works as though work were a kind of frenzy."

"I fly high," said Vinevar with a smile, "I must be sure of my wings." The smile suddenly disappeared from his face, and a cruel expression came over it.

"We might try him and then, 'if thine eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee.' All threads cannot be woven into the cloak without seam."

"All Judaan," said Isaacson nodding his head.

"All Judaan."

Vinevar flicked his pile of letters.

"Yesterday," he said, "I had a letter from Rothschild warning us, that in England the Jews are showing themselves not Englishmen, but a nation with a foreign policy of their own, and that policy hostile to the friends of England. Englishmen will not stand that. Rothschild has protested against it in an open letter to the *Morning Post*. He warns me, Isaacson, lest in our zeal we err, that the pure American is not more tolerant than the Englishman. Well, well, maybe, maybe, we shall see, what we shall see. 'They have parted my raiment among them, and for my garment they have cast lots.' In the glass of the future much is written. Send for the young man, Isaacson. If he is useful to the Cause pay him anything. If he prove not useful, cast him out. And now, Isaacson, be gone, be gone. The time is short, and I have much to do."

Isaacson left Vinevar's office as a priest might have left the Holy of Holies.

CHAPTER II

WHEN Vacla Melfort stood on the threshold of adult life, he had a peculiar antipathy to a fixed code of morals. "Let there be weeds in my garden," he was wont to say. "If there is too much pruning there will be no growth." And in his own peculiar way Vacla was sincere.

The person that Vacla had loved was his mother, and with her death he saw life in an aspect that he chose to make as hard as he could. His father had already passed away, so circumstances had combined to harden and isolate him. His own bereavement had given him no sympathy with the suffering of others, it confirmed his intention to entrench himself in as great a security as possible.

As far as youth is conscious at all, life was to him a journey, an extraordinary journey along two rails that led from night to night. Boredom, monotony, intrigue, interest, love, and hate were sign-posts by which the wise traveller paused as it befitted his mood.

The traveller has come from nothingness, and although he goes to nothingness, during no part of his journey does he allow himself to see again the growing nothingness. He sees no further than the flesh. As life thunders along, he has grasped one bleak truth. Feed the flesh, cultivate it, until like some quick-growing fungus it kills the life upon which it was grafted. The immensity of the flesh little by little will kill the soul. What disunion! The thing of a moment destroying an immortality. So the diseased tissue achieves its full development. It lives to spread its own disease. The tragedy of the flesh is accomplished, and man becomes a parasite.

The significant thing about life at this angle is that it tarnishes. There is no annunciation of finer things to come. The flesh is pitiless. It takes at the last the toll from itself, but by that time the course of life has been changed fundamentally, the inevitable factors have done their work; the soul, the fine fragment of immortality has gone back to obscurity and nothingness. Man's dream has failed.

As he thus idly mused, Vacla Melfort leaned on the window-sill of a hotel bedroom, looking down at the groups, the men, the faces in the

street. The day was declining. On the table in the centre of the room behind him his bags were packed, and he was waiting for the porter to come and put them in the cab that was to take him to the station. Through the void of his window Vacla looked down upon the world of to-day; a world of intrigue and compromise. The groups, the men, if they were to speak, what would they say? Held together by intrigue, by mutual interest, would they ignorantly state that truth was vain?

It is an impressive spectacle, the scuffling life in a public street. With the same detachment that the gods look down upon the earth, Vacla watched the moving shadows. Heaven and hell were within himself; that was the earth. Little by little as the sky darkened, he leaned further on the window-sill watching the passers-by, the people who exchange ideas, glances, grow impatient, angry, tender with each other and to-morrow disappear. Vacla loved himself with a sort of devotion. He never pictured himself as an angel of goodness, but as a spirit of mercilessness with a sharp sword. In the crowd below he saw a possible assuagement of himself, a fiery glimpse, that in the directing and the moulding of the objective of others, he

might succeed perhaps in finding a cure for his own tragedy, his own thirst for a perpetual power. He saw no glory like that of a triumphant ego. He did not mean to cross hastily over the earth's surface. He meant to conquer it. He did not love mankind, he loved himself: that was his curse, the infinite smallness of his belief.

Turn where you will, everywhere you will find nothing exists alone. Love goes in pairs. Religion derives guidance in groups. The parts of the immeasurable universe are dependent one upon the other. And the essential outlines of life teach that man is important only in the relation which he bears to the race as a whole. What Vacla saw in the street below were the groups, the faces, the shadows. What he did not see was the imperceptible relation between his own life and the life of the man in the street.

All at once Vacla drew himself up from the window, and went back into the room. The air was heavy with the mixture of odours that accrue within and without on a hot day. The comings and goings of the crowd, what were they to him? Life was inexorable; the great attribute was strength; the crime of ignorance

was weakness and uncertainty. The weak he ignored and despised. With brute strength he would advance. He crossed the room and rang the bell for the porter. He was impatient to be gone.

* * * * *

That same evening found Mr. Isaacson sitting before his house ruminating, chewing the cud, as it were, intellectually.

"It is now, or never," he said to himself. "It is now or never."

He hovered undecidedly with a match suspended in the air, before striking it upon the sole of his boot. He was wondering if he had the courage to put his market value to a fresh test. Then he leapt to a resolution. The match struck upon the sole of his boot. Mr. Isaacson had decided that it must be now.

Mr. Isaacson's house was in the main street of the town, and the garden extended as far as the river. The house was a square building with two colonial pillars on either side of the front door. It had sheltered the ambitious head of Mr. Isaacson for ten years, but Mr. Isaacson's life was on the point of undergoing a

complete change. He had not yet arrived, but he was in the process of arriving.

Passers-by down the main street on summer evenings were accustomed to see, through the garden gate, Mr. Isaacson seated before his front door reviewing in memory the chief events of the day. The door was too far from the main street for a stranger to form a clear idea of him, but who did not know his short round body, his bald head, his pale face that grew in pallor daily, his face that bore the imprint of perpetual fatigue, so intensely did he throw himself into every idea, every circumstance, every point of view on his way through life. In the midst of this pallor shone his small blue eyes (that the passing of time was dimming) a little troubled perpetually, not so much from unquenchable fire as from the fact that they were constantly moving.

The door behind Mr. Isaacson opened. Mrs. Isaacson appeared with an air of comfortable solicitude. Mr. Isaacson did not look behind him to see who it was; he knew.

"Well, Mother?" said Mr. Isaacson.

Mr. Isaacson had neither sons nor daughters, but he had a way of calling Mrs. Isaacson Mother, that defied any listener to imagine that

he might have wanted anything he did not have. The intonation implied that Mr. Isaacson had a luxuriant family, which he had done away with as a matter of convenience. When he called his wife Mother, he made his relationship to Mrs. Isaacson quite clear, and he stopped argument.

He was aware of Mrs. Isaacson. She stood behind him making no reply to his greeting. Abruptly he waved his pipe above his head in the direction of a placard labelled, "To Let."

"It's the last night in the old house," he said. "We've got to ver-moose, Mother. We've got to ver-moose."

"There are endless reasons, no doubt," replied Mrs. Isaacson resignedly. "I shall just have to go along."

"For better, for worse," retaliated Mr. Isaacson.

"But I hate to leave my asparagus bed."

"For richer, for poorer," elaborated Mr. Isaacson.

"And my strawberries. The plants are so hardy."

"It is now or never," repeated Mr. Isaacson.

"Now or never."

A fly settled on Mr. Isaacson's bald head,

and with a quiet waving of her hand Mrs. Isaacson disturbed it and drove it away.

"It is difficult to express things," she said slowly. "I am a plain woman. I have been happy here. There are many good things in life, though, and I may be just as happy where I am going. Still I shall miss my asparagus bed and my strawberries."

"There is something wonderful about adventure," observed Mr. Isaacson.

Mrs. Isaacson disregarded that. She was looking at the sign, "To Let" on the colonial pillar. "Jacob," she said, "If we are not coming back, why don't you sell the place? Why rent it?"

Mr. Isaacson replied with a peculiar resonance. Something in his voice and manner made his wife look at him.

"Jacob Isaacson never goes back on anything that has served him," he said. "Let an animal, a human being, even a house once be of service to Jacob Isaacson, and he will never part with it."

Mrs. Isaacson rested her hands on her husband's shoulder.

"You are sorry, too. Why do we go?"

Mr. Isaacson knocked his pipe against the

colonial pillar. "Something drives me, Anna. Something tells me that it is now or never. Life makes its claims. To the Jew it is a restless futility. There is no tranquillity for us until we have reconquered our independence and are again at home in Palestine. As a race, we have had a long journey. We have never been at home, but it may be that our sons"—Mr. Isaacson corrected himself—"it may be, that the next generation will return to the Holy Land. Emancipation, emancipation from the yoke of nations. The Jewish people will be themselves at last."

Mrs. Isaacson sighed.

"For centuries they have lived among strangers," he continued. "The Jewish people were destined to go through discipline. Their destiny is accomplished."

"Yes, Jacob," Mrs. Isaacson spoke soothingly, "you love this thought. We will go. I am content. Quite content to leave my asparagus bed and my strawberries." Mrs. Isaacson sighed again softly. "But," her words came jerkily, as though forcing themselves through her generally placid brain, "I cannot help but ask you, Jacob, how all this trade will take the Jewish people back to their own land?"

"Because," Mr. Isaacson declared with sudden force, "our position of dependence has been too insufferable, too unbearable. Dependent! We the most hard-working, disciplined, thrifty people on earth. Yet we are hardly tolerated in society. We foresaw we must have power. Money is power. The Jew trades. He buys. He sells for more. He buys again. He grows rich. The Christian borrows, the Jew lends. He gains control. He has long sight, the Jew. He sees that the one who has the power in the future is he who owns the raw materials of the world. The Jew dives his hands, his long fingers into the very bowels of the earth. He will command. And then he will go where he pleases back to his own land. Trade," continued Mr. Isaacson, "trade is like the circulation of the air; without it the heart of the world would stop."

Mr. Isaacson mopped his brow.

"Don't get excited, Jacob," said Mrs. Isaacson, "don't get excited."

* * * * *

Yet again. At the same hour that Vacla leaned upon his window, that Mr. Isaacson sat before his house, at the hour when twilight was

being absorbed by the dark shadows of night, from a village in the Laurentian hills, a young girl walked down to the cliff to see the moon rise across the St. Lawrence River. The day had been grey and damp. Low-lying clouds, that formed a bank on the southern horizon, were being gently dispersed by the evening wind. The river was calm, but on the cliff the leaves of the birches made from time to time a little rustling sound. The wide St. Lawrence, the fringe of pine trees, the hush of approaching night made a rare effect of beauty, and with it was mingled that air which is partly of the Laurentian Hills and partly a whiff blown through the gulf from the Atlantic Ocean. The young girl gazed and gazed. Those wonderful clear evenings of early summer are like the radiant moments of first love, and like first love in their indefinable quality, they do not occur again.

She was a tall slim girl, with an olive skin and dark thick hair. Her figure had not yet lost the slightness that belongs to childhood. It was languid, as though she had grown too quickly, but lithe, betraying a nervous temperament. And her eyes, her dark brown eyes were more unfathomable than the river which flowed be-

neath. They were passionate and impulsive with something dangerous in their expression for herself. She had just completed her nineteenth year.

There was a breath of wind. It had caught the seaweed laid bare by the low tide and was redolent of the ocean. It was a whiff of something strong and vital and unknown. Something stirred in her memory, something her brain did not reflect, but which lay in the ether of her soul. A vapour of the past. Some phenomenon of an anterior life, hastening to her, stretching out invisible hands to warn her, to recall some form of life to her young memory. Nineteen years on earth, but where before? Memory is limited by the years; but emotion? Over what dark waters may it not have come? May it not live through the experience we call death and persist? What is it that hastens to us at certain moments of our lives? Something which seems familiar, but which we do not recognize. This strange something penetrated the mood of the girl standing on the cliff as, with parted lips and outstretched hands, she murmured the question that is so often flung out by the young:

“Life, life. What do you hold for me?”

CHAPTER III

ON the morning of the twentieth of June, Mr. Isaacson sat in his new office prepared to set in motion the ideas that were to carry his projects further into life. The morning was fine. The sunbeams streamed through the half-open window. The air that came to touch his face was neither hot nor cold. From the street below the ascending noise of the traffic together with the honk-honk of the motor cars came up crisply as if the life of the city was in very good tune. Indeed there seemed to be no false note, nothing to destroy the general atmosphere of well being. Life beat in upon him very hopefully.

The office boy entered with a card. He glanced at it.

"Show him in," he said briskly. "Show him in."

As the little office boy went out, Mr. Isaacson passed his hand over his face preparatory to adopting his sententious manner. Even with

the office boy he was sometimes sententious. He glanced at the clock. Eleven to the minute. That was good. He liked punctuality. Neither too early, nor too late. That was punctuality.

In the doorway stood a young man with broad shoulders, a head of curly hair, very intelligent, piercing eyes under strongly-marked eyebrows; a thick, well-cut mouth; altogether a personality not of a common type, that made a forceful impression.

He made a curious impression on Mr. Isaacson; he awakened in him respect for his power and a kind of involuntary liking. Mr. Isaacson made a tentative movement to rise in his chair, then he remembered that he was now a capitalist employing labour. Instead of rising, he swung his legs free of the desk and sat sideways on his revolving chair.

"Glad to see you," he said. It was difficult for him to deaden his natural effusiveness.

As his visitor came forward, he motioned to a chair facing the window. "Fine weather we're having," he said cheerfully. "Remarkably beautiful morning."

Thus far Vacla had not spoken. Feeling it was time that a ball came back over the net, Mr. Isaacson rested his elbows on his chair,

placed the tips of his fingers together, and waited. Vacla squared himself for the interview.

"I have been told," he began, "that we might be mutually useful to each other." Mr. Isaacson's eyebrows shot up.

This was always Vacla's method of attack, first to sting his listener to a sense that he infringed upon his dignity, then with the suave persuasion of an Irish priest to smooth down the ruffled feathers, beguile his listener into a pleasant mood, and so give evidence at once of his, Vacla's powers.

"I have been led to believe," Vacla repeated, "that I could help you—and you could help me."

Mr. Isaacson with his eyebrows up, sat stiffly in his chair.

"But unquestionably it is absurd that a man with your vision, your enterprise, your special genius for the expansion of trade, should need anyone, not to mention anyone so comparatively untried as I am."

Mr. Isaacson's eyebrows came down. This was the proper focus.

"Still even great men can do nothing without the proper tools, and I have come to see

whether we might not work together for our mutual benefit." Up went the eyebrow. Vacla had now sighted this sign as a signal of dissatisfaction to be watched. "And whether," he continued, "with your psychological vision you might not guide me into the doing of some efficient work. I am young. I am strong. I am intelligent. I am willing. That is what I bring to the market."

Mr. Isaacson relaxed in his chair. He began to like this new tool.

"The function of the stock market," said Mr. Isaacson adopting his sententious manner, "is not to reflect past or present conditions, but to discount the future. Have you foresight?"

"No, but they say that you have."

"What is your business qualification?" asked Mr. Isaacson sharply.

"I can make others believe in what I believe. The object may be worthless, but if I believe in it, I can carry my hearers into a similar belief. I can make them see it as I see."

"The object isn't worthless," observed Mr. Isaacson.

"I know. I was merely saying that my asset is my belief in my own powers."

Mr. Isaacson passed his hand over his face preparatory to impressive speech.

"Business lags," he said, "and optimism refuses to assert itself. We are making unmistakable progress toward readjustment, but there is no assurance that the future does not hold still other troublesome problems and unpleasant surprises. European countries are re-entering all markets. Undoubtedly from now on reports will confirm my opinion, that cheap labour in the older countries combined with economical executives will be efficacious in injuring American trade."

"You are an American, you work for America?" asked Vacla.

"I am an Israelite. I work for Jacob Isaacson. I do not pick, nor choose. Three-score years and ten, a Jewish life—there is no time. Where I find myself, there I labour. At present I am an American in America. After reviewing conditions in more than one country I stay in America—for the present. And it is here that I hope to carry out my impressive catalogue."

Vacla bowed his head to intimate that he was listening. He wondered why Mr. Isaacson used the word, catalogue. To Mr. Isaacson it

conveyed the impression of something vague yet capable of being amplified, filled in, as it were, as his brain elaborated.

"Only a few months ago, we were practically under the shadow of impending panic. All danger of this has disappeared. But a period of low earnings is psychologically depressing, and the market is not prone to optimism. Buyers are not confident. They will not come forward with their money."

Vacla saw Mr. Isaacson's chin drawn in, and his forehead put forward. He was preparing to project his individuality upon his listener. It was a promising sign. There was something tremendously mental about Jacob Isaacson at that moment.

"If you join me," he said, "it would be your business to make buyers come forward with much money. It would be your business to raise thirteen millions."

"It is a great sum," objected Vacla.

"It is a clear possibility," Mr. Isaacson asserted, almost with violence.

"I have power," Vacla affirmed, "but have I enough to exercise it to this extent?"

"Well?" Mr. Isaacson said at last, as Vacla did not speak. "There are no mediums. There

is black. There is white. There is yes. There is no. You take it, or you don't take it. Which? To the strong swimmer nothing is out of reach. You take it, or you don't take it, which?"

With a quick gesture Vacla lifted his head. "I take it," he said.

"Good," said Mr. Isaacson, "good. I will think out details and you will come to me tomorrow at eleven. Not earlier, not later, but eleven. I will then give you your first instructions."

"We must construct," said Mr. Isaacson as if half to himself. "The world's idols are breaking down, we must construct." His voice had the tone of anxiety, genuine anxiety.

"Thank you very much," said Vacla getting up and making a bow. "I shall be here tomorrow at eleven."

Mr. Isaacson turned his sharp little eyes on his visitor. An idea had presented itself.

"Wait a minute. You understand? There must be no wild berries. You must keep your belief in yourself."

"Yes," said Vacla. "I will be here tomorrow at eleven," he repeated as he left the room.

Vacla in speaking to himself about the cultivation of his garden had always been wont to

say, "There must be no weeds in my garden." He had not mentioned berries.

The Jew is the enigma of the world and sometimes the Jew is an enigma to himself. In the case of Mr. Isaacson, there was his real self and his superficial self. His associates had long realized the superficial, the real Mr. Isaacson was only suspected by himself. No one pretends to deny that many a man goes down to his grave with valuable and carefully guarded qualities undeveloped and unknown. On the other hand, the man himself may guess them and he may be too lazy, too hampered by conventionality and self-ease to generate the intellectual power necessary for their growth.

Neither laziness, self-ease, nor conventionality hampered Mr. Isaacson.

When Vacla Melfort left him that morning the lines of his plan were only beginning to form in Mr. Isaacson's mind. He was not sure of the exact pattern. He meant to adapt himself in time to circumstances. Now the Jewish law allows the Jew to do business with a Gentile on a different basis from that on which he does business with a brother Jew. Had the Jew remained in Palestine, he would never have become the financial power that he is, because the

old law of Moses forbade the taking of interest; and interest, almost a speculative interest, has been the basis of his finance. Moreover, the Jew could not make money out of another Jew's distress, because the land which was apportioned among the people might be lost by debt, or sold in cases of need, but every fifty years in the "year of jubilee" it was returned to its original family ownership. The Jews have not got rich out of one another, but out of the people among whom they have lived, and it is the "Law of the Stranger," the law which says, "unto a stranger thou mayst lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shall not lend upon usury," which has allowed them to obey their principles and yet become master financiers among the people with whom they have sojourned.

In a marked degree the Jew possesses a commercial genius. First and foremost he is a trader. The Gentiles still claim, and some modern spiritual leaders of Judaism claim, that Israel's mission to the nations is spiritual; but observation does not convince that the Israel of today is fulfilling that assertion. It is as a trader that his instincts have driven him round the earth. His migrations have been accom-

panied by unpopularity of marked evidence which he has tended to increase himself as he has not cared to cultivate the friendship of the Gentile masses, believing that he belongs to a superior race. Now the Jew undoubtedly has a very high average of intellectual ability. Combined with this, he is shrewd, inventive and resourceful, never showing his hand until the game is played. And the game which he has played in every country throughout the world is as yet hardly beginning to be known. Like Disraeli, his illustrious brother, the smaller Jew is a conspirator.

With a feeling of annoyance that he was being interrupted again, Jacob Isaacson looked up at the sound from the doorway intimating that some one was entering, but as the visitor appeared and the eyes of the two men met, their faces lighted up.

“Vinevar.”

“Isaacson.”

It was indeed Vinevar, the man whose influence and power were well known. If any one had described Isaacson as a Jewish American, he would have described Vinevar as an American Jew. And yet Vinevar was seldom seen publicly in association with his own peo-

ple. He seemed to prefer the Gentile population, his only intimate Jewish friend being Ben Hesse, the official Jewish lobbyist at Washington. So it was with an exclamation of surprise that Isaacson greeted him.

The two men shook hands. Vinevar placed his long black ebony cane with the gold knob on the table. Upon it he laid his hat and gloves, then with the deliberation of one who knows that everything must await the accomplishment of his most trifling action, he sat down.

Vinevar rubbed his long fingers together. "The pass-word, Isaacson," he said, "the pass-word."

"All Judaan," replied Isaacson, "All Judaan."

Vinevar smiled. "'I will curse them, that curse thee,' " he said. "However, to the business in hand. Has the young Gentile come?"

"Yes, he left only a moment ago. He has brains and an engaging personality. I was favourably impressed."

"Experienced?"

"No, but not afraid of work and ambitious. He will learn."

"Would you say that any element in his nature has the upper hand over his mind?"

Isaacson considered a moment before answering. "I think not," he replied finally.

Vinevar frowned. "Sometimes a weak point in a man's nature—a weak point understood and counted upon—gives one a hold over him. It is only the Jew who must sacrifice all his personal desires for the benefit of his people. However, we shall see. You have engaged him?"

"Practically. Salary and details are not fixed, but he comes for instructions tomorrow."

"Our next step," said Vinevar, "is to control the cotton lands of the United States. The first step was to depreciate the market value of these lands as much as possible. The banks have limited the farmer's efforts. They (the farmers) have been given to understand that if they planted more acreage to cotton than they were instructed to, they would not be financed. Cotton production has gone down. Cotton prices have gone up. Yet the profits do not go to the farmers, but to those who control the course of cotton from the first market to the wearer."

Isaacson nodded his head.

"Profitable at every point, is the Jewish plan," resumed Vinevar. "The public must

supply us the money to buy the cotton lands. Our middle men are making a profit in cotton, but it is not enough. We must raise the rest in bonds. This—the young man, what is his name?”

“Melfort,” replied Isaacson.

“Melfort,” repeated Vinevar. “Melfort must raise thirteen millions. We will keep cotton prices up, but Melfort must raise the rest.”

Isaacson knew that when Vinevar began to talk about his projects, no suggestions were expected from him, so he merely listened and agreed with him.

“The best means to attain this,” continued Vinevar, “are bonds. Secured bonds, secured by the cotton lands. The public will lend. We will pay them interest. When we are ready, we will pay back the bonds and keep the cotton lands.

“Salaries,” continued Vinevar, “are determined not by the law of supply and demand, but by favoritism. While we need him, you will give the young man a handsome salary.”

Isaacson nodded. He smiled. At bottom Isaacson was kindly, he was glad to do it.

“The rest, the details, the passing elements,

I leave in your hands. From time to time I will communicate with you. I have many projects. Much is at stake. Many threads are ready for the cloak without seam."

Vinevar rose, took his hat, his gloves, his ebony cane and held out his hand.

"Good bye," he said.

"All Judaan," repeated Mr. Isaacson. "All Judaan."

Unquestionably to be visited by Vinevar was a surprising compliment.

CHAPTER IV

ON the day of his interview with Isaacson, Vacla had come to New York by the morning train, and had gone straight to one of the smaller hotels near the Grand Central Station. He washed, changed his clothes, breakfasted and walked leisurely down the avenue, looking in the shop windows, taking his time, that he might not find himself at Isaacson's office before eleven o'clock.

When the interview was over and he again found himself with time on his hands, he decided to take the stage to the Metropolitan Museum and look at some of the pictures. It was a joyous day. New York from her white pavements to her blue sky sparkled in a glowing exultation. She threw a certain excitement to the people in her streets, and the impression she made was the impression of brilliancy, of noise, of enterprise and enthusiasm, but unlike the cities of the Old World, she hid no mystery. All that she is, is known.

"The gateway to America," said Vacla to himself. "The gateway to America." He had mentally so frequently thought of an opening for his own career, that on the first day of his new life in the United States, he confused the two thoughts, New York the gateway of America and New York the gateway of Vacla Melfort's career. He repeated the slogan—"Twenty-five years of age, everything to gain and nothing to lose." Leaning back in the front top seat of the bus, gazing at the conglomeration of movement that Fifth Avenue presents, Vacla felt sure that the city would yield him something. He had the faith of the young. In middle age a man grows tired of dreams. He wants something real, something to take down the years. Not so, Vacla at twenty-five. Nothing to lose and everything to gain, that was the cue.

Did these people walking up Fifth Avenue, down Fifth Avenue, not know that youth wants things—houses, motor cars, fur coats, jewels? Youth wants things. In youth the sky is so high, the sun is so bright, the world so wide, youth wants things. When one is old the grass is not so green.

New York was a hurly-burly into which had

come Vacla Melfort, young, strong, ambitious, poor. The bus paused in front of one of the luxurious clubs. Through its large, plate-glass windows Vacla saw two or three men reading the morning papers. Twelve o'clock and nothing to do, except read the sporting page and get up an appetite for lunch; an easy task. Next to the bus awaiting the traffic regulations was a large car, with two young, pretty women. One was leaning forward talking and laughing with the chauffeur. A democratic country; the master friendly with the man. The bus moved on. Yes, there was something alive in New York. An intense vitality incapable of capture, but there, there always for the young—Whew-ew-ew-ew! A steel girder being taken to the top of a high building on a side street. Noise and enterprise and endless life. Nothing old, nothing dying. What did they do with their old?

On the seat opposite to him he saw a woman, sitting stiffly erect. His eyes followed the curve of her shoulder. He saw a bronze curl. His eyes travelled to her chin; her neck was wrinkled, tired. Nothing old. No greying hair. They dyed it. Again the bus stopped at a cross street. This time his eyes wandered

to a face waiting in a victoria outside a shop. He gave a little start. It reminded him of his mother, his strange mother with her eyes glowing in her face like coals, coals that ashes could not cover; his Russian mother with her bursts of passionate tenderness to him. A memory flung itself upon him, a memory of himself asleep; damp with sleep in his little bed at home; and then hands groping for him. A pulling away of the clothes, a dragging of him onto his mother's knee, as his head sank like a heavy flower upon her shoulder. The woman in the victoria was a ghost, a reflection, paler. The woman in the victoria would not be subject to those outbursts, those moods. She had not those loving hands that pulled him and pushed him away. He lifted his hat to the memory of his mother. Bless her, she was dead! Funny how a man loves his mother. If she had lived—Ah! well, she hadn't, and the world held motor cars and noise.

His father, the tall ponderous Englishman, neat, clean-shaven with his smooth fair hair, his father with his reticent, his mild interrogatory attitude towards his tempestuous wife,—his father was gone too. Middle-class people in a middle-class home, like many others; backbone;

vertebræ; something needed to hold the social system together. No use belittling his father. He bore his name, Melfort, the Anglo-Saxon stamp. His Dad gone, left regret, gentle regret, but his Mother gone left a pain; a big ache to fill with motor cars and things. He saw his mother at the piano, playing the pieces he loved, taking his father and himself and raising them, flinging them up with the sounds from her fingers above their commonplace home. Her music—patternless pieces of a dream, that was shattered. His mother, but a memory. No one now to detach his soul from his body with her music. No one now to pull him from his bed and wrap him in a blanket to come and see the moon—those were memories of long ago. Here was New York. “The gateway of America.” A ghost in a victoria, and noise and bustle and enterprise; a bubbling stream from which to fill his cup; no more music; no more reminiscent memories; just blue sky and incessant enterprise, and yet there is a proverb that says:

“All that lies buried is not dead.”

CHAPTER V

PERHAPS the most necessary thing to a man is something to reinforce his pride. Even beauty and happiness are occasionally not enough. He wants as it were something that is substantial and very decent. Beauty and happiness crowd each other, but the substantial and very decent rouse him to a continued sense of his own stability. Beauty leaves a dull pain in the soul. Seeking for beauty is like seeking for something that does not exist. Life takes all and returns nothing. Happiness too casts up her account. Quite wilfully she brings a high-water mark of enterprising peace, and when a man goes across to the mediocrity of the commonplace, there is no perfume to strike upon his nostrils and make him sad. The substantial and very decent come and come again with exactly the same strength and warmth of feeling.

When he arranged to make New York his headquarters, Vacla took a small apartment on Fifty-Sixth Street near Park Avenue. Of his

first hours in his own home his after remembrance was somewhat indistinct, but he could never see a man fumble in his pocket for a latch key and put it in a lock, without recalling the mahogany door in the stucco wall of the fourth floor on Fifty-Sixth Street. Decent and substantial and expensive, and as Vacla put the key back in his vest pocket, he had a childish pride in knowing himself the tenant. The world was rich in its limits and this was his own.

He had been in New York barely three months. In the daytime working; getting himself between his new shafts; raising the wind for his loan; learning of the wisdom of Isaacson, with here and there a taking of an hour off at lunch-time to pick up some bibelot and have it sent home. "Don't take off the wrapping," he told the man. He himself wished to cut the string and hear the rustle of the paper as he tore it from a fine bit of Chipendale. He knew the tones of the streets now; the reddish brown of the roofs; the half-hidden fire escape; the half-revealed phantasmagoria. New York swelling without on a prosperous sea. Within, beneath his own reddish brown roof, a good cook, a good man-

servant, comfort, a few nice pieces. He sat in his leather chair and smoked his pipe; a curly-headed young man proud of his natural possessions.

Dreams drifted in from the phantasmagoria, disembodied spirits; grey transparent spirits in a dreamless summer night. Vacla looked at the Chippendale chair. According to the book, it was genuine, rare. Why then this distant rumble of a discontent? An uncatalogued emotion, taking an uninvited stroll through his breast. A bad tendency, this encouragement to a discontent, he said it to himself with impatience. He had everything to be pleased about. Isaacson admitted he was working beyond form. The spectacle of life was good. The forming agency of the economic approved the drama of existence. Whence then these dreams from the phantasmagoria; this lassitude as of a dream dropped down? Life leaned out and a spirit came under the reddish-brown roof, through the half-opened window, a formless tissue that took a form. Vacla saw a girl spirit standing near him, slight, swaying in a cobweb dress; young, half-grown, with a little, oval, spirit face; an unsparing spirit with a tilted chin. Vaca got up from his chair and

moved to it. The beams of light dissolved, there was nothing there.

"God!" he said out loud. "I must be going batty with the heat." But somehow the spirit form in its cobweb dress had catalogued his emotion. "I am like all men," he said to himself. "Man and woman created he them to fill the emptiness of spirit."

At present he had sympathies, prejudices, ideas, without responsibility. A bird with a free wing, with no string in his heart to pull him back from a dangerous flight. Debonair, with a ready word, men and women liked him as he moved among them.

With young gaiety he sorted the recurrent details of his office. With gaiety he put on his hat and entered Wall Street to raise thirteen millions. He liked New York, with its subway, its surface cars, its elevated trains filled with men and women. Bright, gay, careless New York—was it just as careless as it seemed? Vacla often wondered. The influence over him was so marked, that he caught its manners and habits. It was the communication of the exhilaration, he felt, that helped him in the raising of his loan.

Isaacson often envied this unexpended

youth, surging up anew each morning. This hope, this instinct to "having." It was so young. All the while those first days Isaacson watched him to see if any weak trait might manifest itself, any sign of an unreliable lapsing, but Vacla drank little, smoked moderately, and spent his Sundays swinging along a country road, or touring in his new car. A good boy, Isaacson thought—he called him a boy—but with something impenetrable, something lacking in his quite gifted nature. Isaacson, the vine without branches, took a great interest in his new tool. He added Vacla to his chosen group of personages. It was not a waste—Isaacson's empty heart. As sometimes happens with men who have no families, his wife, Anna, the simple, found her shrine there, a large shrine, always ready for her large form, but others too had their niche, ordinary people who had once served him, and as an irony on his non-parentage, a stripling or two who were wont to make Isaacson's tired grey face kindle. In a superficial way, Vacla was one of his striplings; a new fly in the priceless amber of Isaacson's humanity, that he watched as one watches the tricks of individuality in a young dog, in an effort to solve the secrets they

express. Isaacson was a man who walked alone at the end of the day. It seemed to him, that Vacla walked alone under a stormy sky. What perplexed him was that the dog had not the tricks of its own individuality. Vacla had none of the traits of solitude. For once Isaacson, who delighted in his own rapidity of intuition, had a tool that baffled him. From deep experience and power of observation Isaacson gathered that something in this nature was held from him, held from everyone, either by artifice, or by temperament. However, for the moment all went well, and with a knowledge of his own variety of resources, should anything occur to induce lack of confidence, Isaacson trusted Vacla more and more, and more and more gave him a free rein.

"Study peoples," said Mr. Isaacson irrelevantly. "Study peoples. You have to make a raid on capital, so study peoples."

"Individuals, or nations?"

"Both. Men are what they are."

For will power and intelligence Isaacson's match was hard to find. The spirit of unrest had touched him and he found no escape. Sometimes after spending a day in his company, Isaacson took Vacla home to dinner

in his new house. Everything was very new, everything was very much upholstered, everything looked a little as if *carte blanche* had been given to the management of the furnishing department in a departmental shop. The springs in the chairs had too much resistance and lacked that give and take, which form part of the comfort of a familiar seat with an old stuffing. The rugs on the floor were bright and unfaded. The velvet hangings had no darkened folds. The crispness of it all went oddly with Isaacson's white tired face.

"Well, Mr. Melfort," Mrs. Isaacson would say. "I am awfully pleased to see you." Whereat Mr. Isaacson was wont to beam. It always made him happy to bestow, even if it was only "a slice of his own joint."

Would-be leisurely evenings, they were. Mrs. Isaacson sitting with her hands before her, or with a little bit of crocheting; Isaacson with his cigar; Vacla smoking intermittent cigarettes. But as Vacla walked home down the avenue to his own apartment, he had always a feeling that Isaacson was pushed toward a goal by some hidden force, that he too was being absorbed in a stream, a flow of energy, which thrust aside the poetic grace of life, the sense

of happy play, and carried those who were caught in its current on in an ever-increasing roar. And the effect was not to make the world shadowy and unreal, but bright like a white room that was ablaze with shadeless lights.

"Study peoples," said Mr. Isaacson. "Study peoples—"

CHAPTER VI

STUDENTS of Israel have often noticed the pensiveness of the Jewish face. They say that the Jew is early withered by life, and this premature development is explained by the Jew's premature acquaintance with suffering. Scorned and scoffed at, the little Jew has had to learn at an early age to observe and be on his guard.

Vinevar's glance, so piercing, so intense, had a wasted look. His forehead was furrowed with premature wrinkles, his youth had lost its bloom, yet though his body seemed wasted, his blood impoverished, his appearance old, his mind was always alert. He had a secret vitality, a marvellous power, he had not yet exhausted himself, there was sap in him still. Vinevar's spirit, like the spirit of his race, tempered by the persecutions of fifteen centuries, was unbreakable. His motto was, "In spite of everything."

Vinevar was tall; constant bending had given

him a stoop. As he walked into Isaacson's office, one morning about three months after Vacla's arrival, displaying a naïve vanity that in a smaller personality would have been almost childish, a vanity that betrayed itself in the studied importance of personal trivialities, Vacla observed him, observed his pretensions; and being young, unversed in history, Vacla did not lay this longing to dazzle of the Jew at the door of the years that have denied him so long. Perhaps a long record of sorrow and wrong had embittered Vinevar's parents. Their lives had been repellent and unpicturesque, and amid surroundings of spiritual destitution Vinevar made a starved and stunted growth. Repressed patriotism strove in him and was stifled. The very iron bars of the windows in the sad old street of Frankfort would speak if they could and tell of the weakly boy whose poor little body, thin and emaciated through the stress of over-much study, was the subject of ridicule in the school. A groschen or two was often earned by little jobs of copying. This money he saved.

"I must draw my own water from the well," he would say. At first he would be a Jew and then a German, yet before he was out of his

teens he ceased to be a German and remained a Jew.

"Liberty," said Vinevar copying pages for a groschen or two. "Liberty," he repeated, laying the groschen in a handkerchief to buy a ticket for America.

Did the little German boys, who threw mud at him and made fun of his thin little figure, kill his sense of adopted patriotism? Did the memory of that mud perhaps fan a flame of tribalism, more intense than anyone could guess? Plants torn by the roots sometimes do not grow again. They say that in life there is really no small or great thing, that little things become great and great things little when played on by the unfortunate accidents of existence, and that as the years "block in" the outline, the values resolve themselves. A thing is according to the mood sometimes in which one looks at it.

Vinevar joined Isaacson and Vacla with a certain display of pretentiousness.

"Haven't seen you for some time," he said to Isaacson. "How are the enterprises progressing?"

"Very well," Isaacson shook him by the hand. "Very well."

Vinevar turned. "And the young man?"

"My name is Melfort, sir, Vacla Melfort."

"The young man, I have already mentioned," explained Isaacson.

Vinevar scanned him. To be more exact, he scrutinised him, faintly amused, faintly contemptuous. He turned to the one low easy chair and sat in it.

"How do you like New York?" he asked.

"Immensely. It consumes me," said Vacla.

"What is New York?" asked Vinevar slowly, turning his wrinkled forehead towards Vacla.

"A place where one seeks one's own fortune," answered Vacla. "One gives youth, it returns money."

The contemptuous expression dimmed a little in Vinevar's face. The ordinary coin of life had become to him an impossibility. The extraordinary alone held him. The fever that burned in him left him exhausted except for the extraordinary. Men listened to him and acquiesced. He would provoke this youth to argument.

"The workers have not always youth, but they always want money, more money, much money. They are dissatisfied. We the employers must make them content. The life of

one man is nothing if the masses can be made content. To the few their reward is in that they are different, the many must be made content."

Isaacson raised his eyebrows.

Vacla replied. "I don't agree with you. I am young. I have had nothing. My own life is more interesting, more important to me than the lives of all the other people in the world. I work for myself. New York is gay and sunny and it gives me my chance."

"As an individual?" said Vinevar.

"As an individual."

"You must meet Ben Hesse. You are an American. A democracy presupposes the importance of the masses."

"I am not an American, but I am a parallel, a slip of the old geranium stuck in a new soil."

"Canada," said Vinevar curtly, "a province. She needs the activity of freedom."

For one instant Vacla did not reply.

"I work for my own fortune," he said doggedly. "Insofar as I am successful, my activity will be of benefit to the country I inhabit. That is my outlook. I work for myself."

"Something out of the past will trip you up," said Vinevar slowly. Turning to Isaac-

son he inquired about the nominal detail of some transaction as if the slight interest of the moment could not hold him.

"I wrote you that," answered Isaacson.

Vinevar balanced his eyeglass on the end of its string. "My memory is not of the kind that remembers trifles. I am habitually inaccurate. Moreover, my conscience does not impel me to spend an effort in attaining it. I pursue information about great undertakings only."

Vacla noticed that Isaacson listened attentively, as though before him were the man of genius for whom alone he cared. He spoke as a man who had risen from the ranks, who has not had time to learn the tastes, manners, bearing and feelings of a gentleman. He spoke as a man who intended to learn only those things that might serve him in his appointed task. To his friends Vinevar was a mystery. To men of Isaacson's calibre the return to Jerusalem is a poetic sentiment. Men of his type repeat the words "In the West is my body, but my heart is in the East." Not so Vinevar. He had no pious craze for the recovery of the Holy Land. He was not turning his possessions into money, that he might be free to

transport himself to his future country. No, Vinevar was entering into long business engagements, Vinevar was buying land.

As he talked, his conversation was charged with clear and critical thought. He talked as though he were reluctantly involved in some dominant and absorbing mechanism for which later something vital would detach itself. Vacla was attracted by him and then repelled alternately. And when the conversation was over, and Vinevar rose from his chair as though alone in the brain behind his glowing eyes was the strength to lift and straighten his long thin form, Vacla could hardly take his eyes from him.

Vinevar flicked his eye-glass on its string. He took up his gold-headed cane.

"If men had any idea," he said at last, "of the advantages of adversity to childhood, they would make childhood even more unbearable than it is."

Swinging his cane a little from side to side, he went towards the door.

CHAPTER VII

NATALIE was awake. In her bed downstairs, her head propped up by two pillows, Great Aunt Anne was asleep. She had lost consciousness that time was flying. On her walnut bed that had belonged to her mother before her, Great Aunt Anne had forgotten her troubles and had fallen asleep. Daylight never took her unawares. Her face was alert and hard, and the skin seemed tight drawn over the bones, but sleep drew her back into the long-ago and some of the softness of former years relaxed those taut muscles. A thin spare woman she was—with iron grey hair, which once was black—and in waking a great arrogance of expression.

Across the landing her daughter Clara was exhaustively going through a conscientious programme before retiring for the night. She put trees in her boots and placed them outside her door. A marble clock on the mantelpiece

was not exactly in the middle. She straightened it, knowing that her eye would fall on it in the morning. The clock was surmounted by a bronze figure of a horse toiling up an incline with a rider upon his back. Underneath was written the words, "Homeward Bound." Clara was very fond of that clock, it had belonged to her father. She felt that the horse with his right fore foot ever advancing, ever raised, was metaphorical in a manner of time. As she straightened it she read the inscription, "Homeward Bound." That was the proper thing in life, to have got one's direction, to move slowly and with dignity towards a recognized goal. In these days, there were dangers, pitfalls. So much the more was it the duty of those whose characters had been formed by fortunate circumstances of heredity and environment to pursue a recognized path. Above the clock was a text framed in walnut, embroidered in worsted. It said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." If the essence of Aunt Clara's nature was not genial, at least it was pure. She took a last look around her room to be sure she had forgotten nothing before she threw her window up. She looked down the street. October. There was a feeling of frost in the air, the

trees were bare, the leaves gone; no moon, but a lot of stars. Aunt Clara turned off the light and got into bed.

In the servant's wing, cook had gone to bed, but the young housemaid was late, so cook's light was burning so that she might hear her knocking at the side door.

Up in her own room at the top of the house Natalie lay awake. This particular wakefulness was caused by an impression produced by a chance meeting and a look seemingly governed by the laws of elective affinity. A moment that held a sorcery of its own, making of an ordinary moment something unforgettable and fleeting. When we are young and all the future is veiled, like a stage before the curtain has been rung up for the first act, the really interesting things are those which we hardly guess. Shy birds that do not fly too near to allow us to rob them of their mystery.

Life had been sluggish within her that day. She had gone for a walk on the mountain and had lingered, dragging her feet among the rustling leaves rather than return to the drawing room, where Great Aunt Anne and Aunt Clara would be having tea. Perhaps it was written. Perhaps the branches above her head

were waving her home. Perhaps she was awaking out of the great sleep of childhood.

The intense life of the summer was gone. The leaves floated down. The hill-side looked deserted as though its frequenters had fled away, and Natalie turned from it and came home to tea.

She stood in the doorway and looked shyly in to the drawing room. Great Aunt Anne was talking to an elderly gentleman. Opposite to her sat Aunt Clara talking to a young man. The tea-things were still on the table, but everyone had finished. Vacla glancing up caught sight of this young nymph, and there came a look in his eyes that was softer than usual.

"My niece," said Great Aunt Anne. "She makes her home with us. Natalie, come and shake hands with Mr. Melfort."

The tall, elderly Englishman also rose and held out his hand.

"How de do?" he said. "I have brought my young nephew to see your aunts and you."

Natalie turned to the young man. He shook her by the hand, a handshake that seemed to say, "We are young and they are old."

Standing there in her brown, fur-trimmed

suit with soft dark eyes, with outstretched hand and a little smile, she looked very appealing.

"Won't you sit down?"

Vacla made a place for her near his own chair.

"Where have you been?"

"On the mountain, by myself."

She was pretty and lonely and quite a child. Aunt Clara turned to answer a question put by Vacla's uncle, and Vacla continued:

"Why do you go walking all alone?"

"Because I have no one to come with me."

"What a very young admission. If it were true you would not admit it."

"It is true."

It was an opening and he took it.

"Then come for a walk with me to-morrow."

She gave way to a sudden desire for adventure. She looked at Aunt Clara's profile and nodded.

"Rather."

"Where will we meet?"

"At the reservoir."

"Time?"

"Half-past three."

"Don't forget."

Then Aunt Clara turned to resume the con-

versation. They talked about Ireland, and the riots, and the Lord Mayor of Cork. Politicians were satirized. Vacla's uncle was an Englishman, brother to the tall, clean-shaven reticent, Vacla remembered as his father, who carried out the illusion that a man's character transpires in his dress. Vacla's uncle was not a family man. His instincts were bookishness and caution. Despite his eyes, which seemed to follow a friendly instinct, he watched his listener quick to scent any criticism or undue prejudice. He avoided subjects which might prove heated. He scented heat in Aunt Anne on the subject of Ireland.

"One must make excuses," Aunt Anne said. "They have been grossly misled."

"I put it down to the climate," said Mr. Melfort in a conciliatory manner. "It breeds discontent. The only chance for an Irishman is for him to leave Ireland. In some countries now a man is troubled chronically with his"—Mr. Melfort was about to mention the "liver," but he remembered himself just in time—"by one or other of his bodily organs. In Ireland the native is troubled by his soul. It won't let him rest. The climate breeds confusion and a minor violence. He wants something, he

himself is not quite sure what. The want, the discontent is pressing, insistent." His words dried up. He looked at Aunt Anne.

"Nothing in Ireland lasts long," she said shrewdly.

Natalie heard her. "I don't feel as if anything would ever change, do you?" she asked Vacla.

"You are wrong," said Vacla shaking his head. "One thinks that—and then suddenly one finds oneself swept away. The whirligig of time has strange tricks."

"What breaks down the high walls?" she said at last as though thinking out loud.

"Time," Vacla answered. "Time changes everything."

Aunt Anne was growing discursive. Mr. Melfort rose. He must go away now before the argument became heated. "By our errors we learn," Aunt Anne was saying, "England and Ireland alike."

Mr. Melfort held out his hand. "Such a delightful visit and such delicious tea," he murmured.

"We are always glad to see old friends," said Aunt Clara.

"I remember the first day you came to my

mother's house in Merrion Square," said Aunt Anne.

Dreamily Natalie put her hand in Vacla's.

"We are young, and they are old," their handclasp said. "The hillside is as wild and the roads wind as beautifully as ever."

CHAPTER VIII

THE sun was shining. The sky was blue. White clouds chased each other across the sky. It was an omen; a day to be snatched greedily from time; a fugitive, fine day to be made the most of, before winter came, before the sky was grey, and the white clouds were thick and impenetrable. The roots of the flowers were laid away. The earth was over them and the fallen leaves, and above them "despondency" lurked for those who hate the autumn. There are human beings who hate the autumn. Human beings who die a little each autumn of their lives, who each autumn relinquish some tiny spark of vitality, which they never regain. However vital the flowering of the new leaf, something is gone from them which does not return. And each autumn they have a little less to give us, just as light dies a few minutes earlier each night in October.

By the reservoir Vacla waited. He saw the city with a murky veil, and on the edge the grey water of the river. Below and beyond

the river again, a stretch of country and then the mountains, but that part of the picture was not worked out in detail, because although the sun was shining it was not a translucidly clear day. Only the warehouses and the factory chimneys and the church spires in the foreground were distinct and in detail. The haze was the haze of a picture of Monet, and the city did not relinquish her soul.

As he watched the color of October, Vacla waited to see whether Natalie would come. Youth and health were written in his eyes and manner. Thirty years hence he might be walking swiftly, lest he should take cold. To-day he stood leaning by the railings watching the view. At last as he began to grow impatient he saw her coming towards him, slim, graceful, lithe in her brown suit trimmed with fur. As she put her little gloved hand into his, again Vacla had that feeling that they were comrades.

For a moment he had the thought of the renunciation of the love of his mother—perhaps a sister, a wife, the things he had not known; the things that make a man content to let the struggle for power and fortune make place for happiness and sweetness.

“I didn’t know you’d come,” he said.

"Why not?" asked Natalie turning to walk by his side. "I go for a walk every day. It's an early year," she said and added, "I mean the cold has come quickly."

Vacla declared that he liked the cool crispness. He compared it to New York and said he found it more invigorating. He did his best to amuse her with stories of the theatres, of the picture galleries, and other general topics of interest. Finally his curiosity was aroused. He turned and looked at her. He asked:

"Are you staying with your Aunts for a visit?"

"No," she answered. "I am there for always." She surprised him by the blunt way she said it. It was a blending of a sigh with dogged endurance.

Vacla glanced at her. "Your Mother and Father?" he asked.

"Are dead," she answered. "I am there for keeps."

"You think that," he agreed. "My uncle who came with me yesterday is my godfather. I lived with him. I thought I would never get away, but I did. So will you when the time comes."

Natalie shook her head.

"No, it is not so easy. I am a girl."

She raised her eyes as he half turned. They had a peculiar glow. "You know, then, that feeling that one is caught in a net?"

"Yes," he answered with a short laugh. He told her he was a fighter, a man who liked difficulties to overcome.

"I don't want things to be too easy. See my square chin?"

"There is a dimple in it," she said. They both laughed. He swung along beside her contentedly, and as he walked, he talked, egotistically as the male is egotistical.

"I am a fighter. I fight not for anything very big and great, but for myself. I mean to have the greatest modern power, gold. I am learning how to cover a debit with a debit, to cover an interest on a loan with another loan. These are modern methods of financial enterprise, and when I understand them I shall use them to protect myself."

So his talk went on at random, of interest to himself, meaningless to her except that he was excited, lit up by the general consciousness of himself and his own enterprises. His enthusiasm rather than his meaning made itself clear. As he talked he seemed to gather her

into his will. Without knowing it, Natalie was feeling that here was a chance, that in this power she might escape. They were the young drawing apart from the old, to create the life of their own generation. He had a wonderful voice that could ring its vibration through her soul and move her to enthusiasm. Vacla was aware of no limits to himself. She was aware of hers, painfully aware of very high walls, gateless and unscalable. She had the fatalism of the young. The sun was nearly down. They must turn. On the way home she gathered some leaves. Vacla was masterful. He stopped her, saying she had enough. She drank in his companionship as a starved plant draws up water, and all through the walk the conviction grew with both of them that they were comrades. They made an appointment to meet the next day. Just as they were separating, Natalie asked him:

“When you have got all these things, will you be happy?”

“Of course I’ll be happy,” he said.

But when he had left her, he was almost in need of being reassured.

“It’s deuced funny,” he thought, “that child!”

CHAPTER IX

WHEN Vacla returned to his uncle's flat, he found Mr. Nathaniel Melfort carefully removing his goloshes and hanging his coat on a kind of combination mirror and hat rack in the hall. To explain his early return from the office, his uncle said:

"The old Doctor is coming."

He straightened his back as if with difficulty, and turned to Vacla. How good to look at, the chap was—healthy, strong! Poor Wyndham's boy. He was better looking than his father had ever been. Headstrong a bit; a great aversion to a tight rein; restive, but so far no sign of kicking over the traces. Standing there beside him, Mr. Nathaniel Melfort looked grey, the muscles around his mouth drawn in, as though forces were preparing to make a necessary resistance.

"You're not ill, Uncle Nathan?" said Vacla suddenly.

"No, no. He is just coming to smoke a pipe with me."

A sound was heard in the passage and then

the ringing of an electric bell. As Vacla opened the door, around it came a tall spare form and a face that was full of the wisdom of experience. This was Dr. Maurice Ebbing, known by his poor patients and his rich patients alike by the gentle nickname of "the old Doctor."

It had always been Nathan Melfort's destiny to watch life from a corner; and when he wished for some contact with the general interests of life, he was wont to ask his old friend Maurice Ebbing in to smoke a pipe.

Vacla followed them into the library. The Doctor picked up a book that lay open face downward.

"Still reading Maeterlinck, Nathan? You old mystic, you like him, because he has given a picture of life as a dream."

"I like him for his ideas about the dead. As life goes on, we grow curious about those we may see again. You must notice that in your profession."

The Doctor took out his tobacco pouch. "Thank you, no," he said to Vacla, "I have my own brand." Vacla struck a match and held it up to him. The Doctor took one or two good puffs, and settled himself in his chair.

"You are wrong," he said. "It is the young who are most interested in death. Life is so complex to them. They imagine that death will simplify it. To an old man standing at the end of life, time has prepared the nerves, the muscles, the general organism for the departure of the soul. To the old, death is segregation. To the young, death is a cleavage." He paused a second and added, "Christ died in the prime of manhood, when the struggle is greatest."

"You are an old-fashioned Christian. You've never taken up any of the new ideas," said Uncle Nathan softly.

"He's a funny duck," thought Vacla. "Old-fashioned."

"There is a written tradition," said the Doctor, "that the study of medicine makes a man very good, or very bad. When I find anything better than Christianity, I am ready to give it up. The man of intellect can perhaps create his own beautiful fable, but to the poor, to the suffering, to those who have lost everything, and those who have nothing to lose, there is no belief like the belief in Christ. Without it the poor die like dogs. Life is a continual going on. It rises, it falls, it changes, but it goes on. I am the dust man, that people

call in when trouble comes. When I have been very necessary, out in the middle of the night, giving hope to the anxious, trying to save a life that is needed beyond human conception, the grateful ones send me perhaps a little flower at Christmas, and then they forget me, Nathan, until trouble comes again. I am just an old dustman, there when peace is lacking, and perhaps I hold a dustman's views. Man's noblest desires, what are they? To do our duty, we must do it with what is best in us. And to do our best, we must possess our soul in peace. For the physician, the shadow of death lies upon life. There is much that we encounter, that the eye cannot see, and it is impossible for us to be happy as they are who live for happiness alone. One man dare not die without a priest. Another believes that all ends in this world. The things that matter are to look fearlessly on life; to have peace and confidence within our souls."

"Old-fashioned duck," Vacla thought again.

"You believe in the 'brotherhood of man?' " he asked.

"My nephew is a materialist," interrupted Uncle Nathan.

"I do," said the old Doctor.

"Liberty," quoted Vacla, "is the right to do that which is permitted by law. Why may I not pursue my own course and under the law work for my own benefit? The masses never inquire into the inner meaning of things. They are carried by their leaders from one disappointment to another. It is all the same to them who leads them. I believe there is no chance to-day in any country for the masses as a mass."

The Doctor smiled. "There is a force that has no name. It is an eternal spring."

"This boy here is an individualist," said Uncle Nathan.

Vacla tried vainly to put forth one of his arguments, but an emptiness crowded into his brain. He let them talk on. The old generation talked, and he the young one listened. The thing was unbelievable, that he could ever come to their views. His thought cautioned him. Life was failing them. They met together to bolster each other up. They would not admit it, but they were fearful. They needed each other. Well, well! They had their ideas. Out of his dream of his own isolation, he derived strength. Out of the eternal disorder, to the

young and the strong came accomplishment of known and definite ends.

"Their ideas are out of date," he said.

The old Doctor knocked out his pipe. "I must be getting on my rounds," he objected.

"You'll have a little cheer," said Uncle Nathan nodding his chin. He went to a tray and poured some whiskey into two glasses. "The boy here doesn't," he explained. He filled them from a syphon. He handed one to the Doctor.

The Doctor nodded, raised his glass. "Some day you will come around to our views," he said to Vacla. "When that day comes, as that book of Maeterlinck says, there will be 'enchantment for the disenchanted.' "

"Funny duck," said Vacla when the door closed.

CHAPTER X

NATALIE looked out of the window at the leaves, falling, falling, falling in the autumn air. The vine against the side of the house was bare. The branches of the oak tree were almost bare. When a gust of wind came, a leaf detached itself and then turned over and over as it fell. The leaves attracted her and hurt her. They attracted her as things changing, passing away, things that to-morrow would be gone. They hurt her because they were powerless, defenceless in the wind. The wind ripped them and carried them away.

Something inside Natalie rebelled against the autumn. Aunt Clara did not like it, because it gave her rheumatism. Aunt Anne did not like it, because it reminded her of the wrinkles that crept yellowing up her neck. Everything in the world would one day come to an end. Natalie hated the autumn. She was a pagan. She loved life and imperishable things.

Aunt Anne and Aunt Clara came down the

stairs. They were going out. Natalie listened. Aunt Clara called her and she went out into the hall.

"If you want tea, you must tell the new housemaid," said Aunt Anne. She caught sight of Natalie's feet. "You must not wear your boots in the house," she said. "You remember, I have told you that."

"I thought I might go out again," Natalie apologised with an almost imperceptible shrug of her shoulders. She went back to the drawing-room window and watched them go down the street. Aunt Clara was short and a little stout; Aunt Anne thin and old. A minute ago she had been angry with them, now she forgave them. After all they did their best by her in their way.

She was still watching them with the curtain drawn, when she saw a figure come up the little path from the street. The strange man took off his hat and waved it. Natalie recognised Vacla. He laughed at her unpreparedness. She did not even open the window. He motioned to the front door and went in its direction. He stood on the steps and the leaves drifted down. And Natalie, wanting what the world had to give, opened the door.

"I am lucky," he said, "to find you in. I happened to pass your aunts. They did not see me. I wondered if you were at home. I hope I am not troubling you; if I am I will go away."

"No," said Natalie, "you may stay."

He followed her into the drawing room. She rang the bell and presently when the young housemaid came, she ordered tea.

Vacla sat looking at her. He looked at her carefully, from the brown, curly head to her feet crossed under her. A dispirited expression was in her face, the look of the trapped animal that knows that the trap cannot be broken. This expression combined with her extreme youth made an appealing charm.

"Why do you look like that?" he asked, "you are so young."

A force was hurling past them sweeping the barriers down.

She shook her head. "I look very much like everyone else," she answered. The force was in the room scattering prejudices and habits, the things that keep passion out of life.

"We are intended to be happy," said Vacla.

Natalie played with the cuff links of her blouse.

"The purpose of my life is to do the will of that Power which has sent me here. That is what I have been taught to believe," she added.

Vacla put his hands in his pockets and leaned back in his chair. "It is too serious, too intense." Hesitating for a moment to see whether he had offended her, Vacla began to talk, not to put her at her ease, because she seemed marvellously at ease, but to cheer her, to arouse her. He told her of his life in New York, of Isaacson, of his bald head and the fly that always seemed to find its way there. He told her of the apartment, of his Chippendale, of his "findings" in auction rooms, and she listened in a kind of absorption. And as the little housemaid came in to bring the tea, he confessed to his one sentiment—his love for his impulsive mother. His tentative effort to amuse her with now and then a flash of seriousness was bringing a response.

When they were drinking their tea, she said rather suddenly, as if a will-o-the-wisp were leading her on:

"A minute ago, when I told you I was here to do the will of an unseen Power, I meant I'd been taught that, not that I wanted to."

"Of course. All that is for people who are

done with everything. Life is beastly short, one can't miss things."

"Yes," she answered dreamily, "shorter for a girl than a man, and the rules they give us to go by are like old time-tables. The trains do not run by them any more."

"You'll marry some day, and get away."

"No, I won't. I never meet anyone, very much. If I do, there are always two or three people there, listening to what I am saying. It shuts me up in a box and smacks down the lid."

"But you must marry. This is all very well now, but in ten or fifteen years what will there be for you here?"

"I suppose it will be the same. I made a chum once, a girl at school. We became great friends. I used to go to her house, but after a time I found I couldn't ask her here. She seemed to expect it. I couldn't ask the Aunts to let me have her, it might have put them out. They are very good to me, but they keep me because of duty. Sometimes I pretend, when I am out, that there will be a letter for me when I get back, to say I am to go away. I almost believe it. I hurry home and actually look on the hall table. Silly, isn't it?"

Vacla frowned. "I think it is a dashed shame!"

"Ah, but you mustn't. They are good to me, but I have the wrong time-table."

Without quite knowing how, they found themselves pushing their way into each other's confidence. Each other's thoughts hollowed in the other's mind a little nest. The fire in the grate was burning. The logs had become great embers, only one of them, which was wet, went on smoking and cracking.

"You must be my little friend," said Vacla. She drew from him a kind of tenderness, a something out of nothing, like the sun draws the flowers from the earth. He talked again, and Natalie listened with a dreamy smile. For a moment he remembered the evening in New York when a phantom seemed to come through from the street, something that he needed to assuage his mood. Something pulled at his heart; pity perhaps; the thought of youth flung into life too soon. Something was coming up to them. Something was wrapping them around. Time the relentless, the fugitive ticked on.

"I must go," he said suddenly. He felt her eyes centre on him as if gazing at what she had

seen before. She looked as if something had made her afraid. He went abstractedly to the door. Their silence held to emotion a beckoning hand. "Silly," he said to himself.

He went into the hall and got his hat, his coat, his gloves. He counted them. He had everything, then he remembered he hadn't said good-bye. Natalie was standing looking at the fire.

"I have so much to tell you," he said, "tomorrow on the mountain."

They heard the sound of a bell ringing. It was Aunt Anne and Aunt Clara coming home.

CHAPTER XI

NATALIE'S first memory of those walks with Vacla was always the meeting by the reservoir. The second was a wooded slope carpeted with golden leaves. They were sitting on a fallen tree watching a squirrel eating a nut held between its two front feet. The golden colours of the autumn wood tinged by the setting sun were displaying their opulence.

Natalie never could in retrospect follow out in her own mind the sequence of what followed. One moment she was sitting on the trunk watching the squirrel, the next Vacla's arms were round her, and she felt his cheek pressed against hers. It was a moment that struck off of its own accord, like instinct in the path of some known trail.

"I must go home," she said breathlessly, and broke from him running over the autumn leaves. Vacla was the fawn in pursuit. He overtook her while still under the trees. A quick capture with her brown coat hugged close to his grey tweed one. A moment, then they

started out to the road and swung home with a rhythmic stride. Golden leaves and love indeed. A delirium relaxed. Away from him Natalie could not put him out of her mind. Funnily enough, in spite of her strict upbringing, she was not shocked that at their fourth meeting Vacla had kissed her. For all her youth she took it in strange gravity, as a gift bestowed, but on one alone and therefore impossible of being cheapened, even though it came quickly. Sometimes the clash of their personalities set up a discord. They disagreed, aloof with nothing to bring them together. They remained detached. On the whole perhaps, that is the way of every love affair.

But on those evenings, Natalie longed for Aunt Anne to make the move, that meant bed-time had come. It was one of the unwritten laws of the house that Aunt Anne made the suggestion when bed-time had arrived. How old-fashioned they were in following their little formula! Their friends were fewer than they had been in the old days, and those who came to the house generally came to afternoon tea, or to luncheon. Thus the evenings were uneventful. Aunt Clara, and Aunt Anne, and the formula.

Aunt Anne knitting, her wool in a black satin bag, as if it too had changed for dinner. Modestly high necked, but changed. Natalie with a piece of embroidery. Aunt Clara with a book to read aloud. Family reading; humourous; whimsical with no shocking passages; occasionally perhaps Miss Havergal's poems, or extracts from the *Church Times*. The first intimation that the evening was over was the opening of Aunt Anne's bag. It received the knitting, then she pulled the ribbons together and closed the bag, and made this remark:—"Clara, you can't see to read any more. You are straining your eyes." The remark meant that Aunt Anne's interest had lapsed.

One evening when Aunt Anne put down her knitting, she put Natalie through a catechism. It seemed that someone had seen her walking on the mountain with Vacla. To Aunt Anne it was like discovering a personality in what had hitherto been impersonal. Her philosophy of life did not keep pace with Natalie's. Said Aunt Anne:

"Natalie, you and young Mr. Melfort were seen walking in the Park."

Natalie was surprised, taken unawares.

"I did not altogether like him," Aunt Anne

said. "I thought him a little free and easy; modern manners. Why didn't you tell your Aunt Clara and me you had met him? Was it accidental?" Aunt Anne paused ominously.

Natalie wished to answer, but how? She couldn't say it was accidental. One didn't lie actually. And yet she dare not say it was arranged. She fumbled, "O! I don't know."

"Nonsense!" said Aunt Anne briskly, "that is a favorite expression of yours, 'O! I don't know.' But about the young man. Don't have any romantic idea of marriage with him. His uncle tells me he is very ambitious, and that it will be years before he can settle down."

The sight of the blood rushing into Natalie's cheeks gave Aunt Anne some satisfaction, because she added in a gentle tone:

"If he has any serious intentions, he can come forward in a proper manner and ask the consent of those who are responsible for you." The remark was followed by a long silence.

Aunt Clara broke the hush.

"I thought him quite a nice young man," she smiled timidly in Natalie's direction. To go against Aunt Anne meant courage.

"Nonsense, Clara, you don't know anything about men and never did." Natalie did not see

Aunt Clara's championage. She was struggling to preserve her composure. She had some self-command, but she was glad to fold up her work and go upstairs to her own bedroom.

She was aware of Vacla as she had never been aware of any human being before. She felt him as something solid and strong and trustworthy beyond measure; further as a chance of escape, as the open door to her cage. When she left him and came home, it was as though a cavity entered a cavity. She felt hollowed, empty, coming into a house that was hollow and empty.

Natalie hid this new interest in life, hid it knowing that if it became known it would be confiscated, tamed down to something conventional and along dull lines. Every natural instinct was put in chains.

There came an evening when Aunt Clara and Aunt Anne went out. Vacla was to watch; then knock on the glass of the front door. If all looked propitious, she was to let him in.

She was exalted, excited, her face shining with a wistful admiration. He was strength and egotism. He put his arm around her, and there was again that force, that fatality in the

room that drew them together. Meeting was the anodyne of emptiness. Her excitement communicated itself. Her exaltation made a queer spiritual appeal.

Vacla's hand sought hers, he said words he had not intended. The three words that were to her a vow: "I love you," in a whisper as he watched her sitting slim and white-frocked beside him. Their hands were still joined. He took his away. Her hand crept to his coat and gave it a little tug.

"Will you meet me to-morrow?"

"Perhaps it would be better if I shouldn't."

"Don't you want to?"

"Yes, I do."

"Be nice to me," she said relinquishing her hold.

An intimacy enveloped them, as if they were bound together by some tie. The room became beautiful, glowing. The flames swept up the chimney in a kind of ecstasy.

He took her face in his hands and kissed her.

"Do you like me?" she asked with a laugh, tugging at his coat again. He was awkward, clumsy. His clumsiness reassured her. Although only nineteen, she sensed it meant lack of practise.

"Brother and sister," she said.

"No," he answered, "not exactly."

Her lips parted.

"What then?"

"Lovers," he said.

She still held his coat. She made a pleat in it with her finger and thumb, her face became grave.

"You aren't light about those things?"

"Rather not." He would have sworn anything to reassure her. He wanted to kiss her again. His arm crept round her waist.

"You are rather a darling," he said.

He expected her to deny it, but she didn't. Her face beamed starry like a parched moonflower suddenly moistened by dew.

"Tell me," she said, as though she did not know the meaning of her words, "what is love like?"

"Music," he answered, trying to answer in her own mood. "It fills all the emptiness like music."

"Some people say that there is no such thing as love at first sight. Aren't they silly?"

"Yes," he nodded.

"Will it last always?"

He nodded again. She drew it from him

against his wish. He felt she took it too seriously. The clock struck ten. He rose to go. Letting him out, she buried herself between the arms of his tweed coat.

Aunt Anne and Aunt Clara came home.

In this age of emancipation it is difficult to realize that a girl could not naturally be friends with a man of her own class, but Natalie was sensitive to atmosphere, and the atmosphere was constraint.

Once upstairs, Natalie was thinking of Vacla. "I won't give up seeing him," she said defiantly. "Why should I?"

To make sure of what one could in life, that was the thing. How could Aunt Anne and Aunt Clara know? The waters of emotion had receded years ago. Old as the hills, they were, old as the hills. And into her thoughts the poison ran rife. She put her face against the cool glass of the window. "I love him!" she said out loud to her room.

The aunts had taught her to pray. She sensed things to which she had no key. Prayer was a groping for something needed. She flung herself beside her bed.

"O! God give him to me!" she whispered, "give him to me!"

CHAPTER XII

THE irresistible masculine tendency to conquer was in danger of mastering Vacla, yet Vacla the egotist with an ache that periodically arraigned itself for a large assuagement; Vacla looked at this from his own point of view and paused. Like many another of his type with a strong selfishness, he combined a kind heart. With Natalie, she moved him by her prettiness, by the candle light that burned within her, by her clinging to him. Away from her, she seemed frail, insufficient. He sensed it, a resting of a hundred pound weight on a lily of the valley. But in part he was kind, he would not have thrust away a puppy that came to him for protection, so he took the trouble to argue it out, that as she was a young woman of only nineteen, it was impossible that any event should have left upon her an impression that was not in time capable of being obliterated. Better stop their walks now. His business was nearly accomplished, then he would return to New York and forget her. Silence this half-

conscious rhapsodie, avoid profundities. This was a passing love, for love's own sake—nothing more.

Saith Vinevar of the long fingers and the ebony cane: "The King of Israel shall not be influenced by his passions."

"Closed," was over the episode, "by order."

Five or six days passed in silence. Natalie went every day to the mountain. It was difficult always to be free at three o'clock to go to their meeting-place, but on one pretext or another she had managed it. Once outside the house, she almost ran. Every day she returned deeply troubled. What was he doing? What was he going to do? Why did he not send her word? Such is human inconsistency that although she had told him not to write for fear of her aunts' objecting, yet she looked for a letter at every post.

At last one day they met by accident.

All day long the snow had fallen in heavy soft flakes. It whirled and fell and drifted, and the wind took it and made uneven banks. The snow covered the dust. It buried the few leaves, that the street-cleaners had allowed to escape. It deadened sound. The world ceased to be an outline and became a mist; mysticism and a

kind of ecstasy. People were carried along in a sort of gentle whirlwind.

Through the snow Vacla hurried, his hands in his pockets, his head down. Through the snow Natalie walked blindly, their paths steadily converging. It was dark. The corner light blazed up with a sizzle. The darkness became full of phantoms. The streets in front of the houses were covered by snow. The branches of the trees, all white, were like outstretched arms. Vacla saw them but they made no appeal to him, only sound penetrated to his heart, not form. In the windows, lights behind the blinds. Vacla with his head down pushed on, musing. A man's mind could hold only a certain sum of new creative ideas. With the maximum amount carried, everything else must be thrown aside, to lighten the craft. A capable economy meant progress, rapid progress. The groups must be eliminated, the units left—the patriotic sentiment, the influences which arm and disarm, even the love of those who are on a level with our own souls, are attributes best excluded from a bark scheduled to travel fast. Following the tracks of the snow, he took resolve, that to the strong there must be no shelter from life's defeat.

It was then that he raised his head and saw her.

She wore a fur coat, and under a fur cap above her ears her hair was covered with snow; he saw that, by the pale green shadow of the corner light. Blindly she put out both hands. He took them to keep her from falling.

"Where have you been?" she asked, "where have you been?"

A little sob caught the words in her throat. She choked and drew back her hands.

He took her hands again and held them in his own, and said: "I've been busy, I couldn't come." It was not what he had intended to say at all.

She threw back her head and raised her eyes. The snow drifted round them and they seemed quite alone. Quickly Vacla bent and kissed her.

Leaning together they stood a minute in silence. He put his two hands on her shoulders and pushed her gently away.

"I didn't mean to do that," he muttered. "You are a darling, and the storm is exhilarating. It makes one want to live forever."

"They don't want us to be friends," she said.

"Why not?"

"You see, I'm just a niece. And they are old-

fashioned. And they don't approve of unconventional ways."

Something in her face said more than her words, and other words bubbled up in him than those he intended. Quickly he looked up and down the deserted street.

"Poor little kid!" he said hoarsely, and pulled her close to him again.

Assuagement; assuagement for a moment in the drifting snow.

As he left her, the bells rang out across the snow, the church bells calling the faithful to evensong, a sound to which none can put a name that describes it aptly. A sound made doubly poignant by the crisp air; a sound like voices searching in the darkness for response.

Vacla heard it. A thrill ran through him and he smiled.

CHAPTER XIII

ONCE more the flashing glitter of New York laid hold, and in its movement it was not easy to preserve a balance of values. Exceptional character might have triumphed over the peculiar combinations of temptation set forth. Born in an epoch which specially coerced some decisive tendencies, Vacla did not so triumph. By the emptied culmination of his home life on the death of his parents and the menacing isolation into which this termination threw him, he had evolved a conception of existence that was of a drastic egotism. Egotism was in him a growth, a growth of wayward tissue, worked upon by the spirit of the age. He evolved a dream of personal aggrandisement, a dream wherein the practical life was intensely developed, the inner life left a neglected growth. Personal aggrandisement at personal risk became a slogan. He took chances, that he might become a force to be reckoned with more quickly.

At first he remembered Natalie. It seemed to him that he could feel her glance, her move-

ments, the clinging quality of her hands; but in time New York absorbed him and the memory of her became less distinct. A strange good luck pursued him. He had hardly to enter an office before he had secured a large order for the bonds, the bonds put upon the market by Vinevar and Isaacson.

"Natalie and failure, I cannot connect the two," he said to himself.

She would come out all right, would readjust without him. As for him, he wanted no woman as yet. When he did, Natalie might not be the one most necessary to him.

One evening, having realized Vacla's extraordinary success, Isaacson invited him to come and dine.

"The missus will be there, but we can have our smoke," he said with his tired smile. This smile was particularly characteristic of him to Vacla. It was the effort of cheer made by a man whose efforts had been so herculean, that cheer in the irresponsible sense was no longer possible. It was the wistful smile of the self-made man.

In that happy state of companionship and mutual good-will which is the outcome of the post-dinner mood, resultant from a good slice

of the joint, Mr. Isaacson smiled with tired good-humour.

"Dear me," he said cutting the end of a very fat cigar, "our young friend here, Mother," he nodded to Mrs. Isaacson seated leisurely with her hands clasped idly upon her lace front, "our young friend, Mother, is to be congratulated upon his activities."

Mr. Isaacson invariably began an evening in this way. He complimented his guest. He commended him to Mrs. Isaacson, thus putting the company on the very best terms with themselves, and with each other.

There followed a little divergence from the subject in hand, wherein Mr. Isaacson proved by testimony that Mrs. Isaacson enjoyed his fullest trust and confidence. The guest watching Mrs. Isaacson at that moment would have seen a sigh swell the proportion of the lace front, a sigh of perfect contentment, after which her hands again settled themselves in quiet idleness.

"He has done well," said Mr. Isaacson. "I am proud of his activities." Mr. Isaacson shifted his cigar from the middle to the corner of his mouth while he talked, and then with the inside help of his tongue, brought it back to its

old place again when his remark was made. His broad face showed symptoms of being about to convey information. Isaacson, the son of a prophetic people, loved to air his views.

"Study peoples," he began. "Beware of portraits, painted with a very free brush where one side is all shadow, the other all light. The salient traits of nations are disappearing beneath the pressure of modern life. Life holds many possibilities of failure. As a race we have a strong will, that is the secret of our success in Russia. The Slavs grovel before strength of will, they wanted a master and they have taken this bondage upon themselves. Study the science of human nature. If you are strong, search out the tendencies of the weak. All humanity presents itself in plastic form to those who have great strength of will."

At that moment the telephone rang. It was characteristic of Isaacson that in spite of having bought an ornate and pretentious house, he had only one telephone. He had a reason for it. He did not wish his affairs overheard by the inquisitive ear of some listening servant. He went across the hall to his study to answer it himself. In a moment, he returned saying it was a long-distance call from Sunnytown.

Vacla glanced at Mrs. Isaacson. She was sitting in a leather rocking-chair whose mahogany base rocked in a firm mahogany stand. It was the nearest approach to a rocking-chair she could have in this room. She rocked, gently moving the tips of her toes. At the name of Sunnytown a soft expression came into her face.

"It makes me think of the time we lived there," she said. "Jacob wasn't so busy, and he was almost always at home in the evenings. In the summer evenings we used to sit on the porch."

Out of the shallow darkness of memory this picture presented itself, an inconsecutive beauty, among the memories of life. It reached the surface of her mind and took form. She considered, hardly aware of her spoken words, bringing facts out of this forgotten mystery.

"Why even then he thought of buying this grocery. It backed on a little row of houses that he'd got. I wish he had. I am a regular fish out of water with this money. A nice little corner grocery and able to take an interest in it"—she reflected for a moment—"well, now he's thinking of buying it again."

Vacla pricked up his ears. Isaacson buying a corner grocery. Isaacson the man of vision,

with a Semitic dream of his people back in Palestine. Isaacson with more money than he could bring himself to spend. There was something behind all this. He watched her with renewed interest.

"Of course, it is no use getting excited over it, but a nice little corner grocery back in Sunnyside, now that we are not so young as we were"—she rounded her conversation with a persistent rocking.

Back from the telephone sitting in his armchair Isaacson talked again, but he was not disposed to mention the nature of his long-distance call. Every phrase, every remark betrayed both knowledge and power. He understood his own race thoroughly, and his comments on them were unerringly shrewd. He spoke as a man in whom life had succeeded in wearing away pettiness. Isaacson the man of talent was not bitter, Vinevar the man of genius was bitter.

"Yes, yes," he continued, "the Jew has kept his energy, but he has kept it within him out of sight. Only the strong, the energetic have survived. The vacillating, the weak have been eliminated by the centuries. They have succumbed to persecutions, or the attractions of

other religions. We have come through fire and water, during twenty centuries of suffering. It is hard to say what is left in the Jewish soul after all that is past; perhaps Vinevar alone could tell you. Vinevar knows."

As Vacla walked home he meditated upon Isaacson's sayings. Very naturally he resented his reference to Russia, declaring that the Jew ruled there because the Slav had no will. Vacla was in the pay of these men, was he falling a prey to their ideals? No. He worked for them while it suited him; when they were no longer needful, he would show his independence, then he would no longer crouch before these Princes in Israel. So as he walked his thoughts tossed from side to side.

Why did Isaacson want to buy that property in Sunnyside? He knew a lot of the details of his business, but not this. Suddenly he remembered a headline in the evening paper lying on Isaacson's desk. It was "Chesapeake and Ohio will build new Union Station at Sunnyside." Vacla bit his lip.

"I learn from the Princes in Israel," he said, with a smile. "I am on."

CHAPTER XIV

VACLA was now in the training school of action, a phase where the inner life is subordinate and the life of action is too often poorly disciplined in thought and goodness. Partly, perhaps, because of youth, partly it was lack of knowledge that kept the variations of the word "individual," forever on his lips. "Individuality," that quality that differentiates a man from his fellows, became to him a symbol, a symbol of the power to take, and taking was fast becoming the motive of his being. He was of the new order of public men. Their motto was: "Personal aims, personal power at personal risk." When he drove through Fifth Avenue as for the moment he was driving through life, smiling, successful, acquisitive, expounding in his business conversations the propaganda of the Individual, he was not yet become conscious of one fact, the relation of the Individual to the State and Society, in which he finds himself. Germany is a warlike example of blind will-power, determined to force its way with

life a game and men mere counters to be used. The new spirit, the spirit of wealth at all costs, was working like a poison in his veins. Shrewdly to his purpose, he gathered, he worked, he bought, he sold. And his undertakings were crowned with success. Successfully he skated over thin ice and to his own surprise it held. Go-ahead days these were. Go-ahead days!

In the office, on one occasion, a subject was broached hastily by Isaacson.

"Had Vacla heard? That bit of property he was after in Sunnyside had been snatched from him, between the cup and the lip. Just a matter of two thousand, Isaacson was holding out for a better price. Then overnight some unknown hand had snatched it. Now the Chesapeake & Ohio might be diverted to another site. Had Vacla heard?" Isaacson watched him narrowly.

Vacla shook his head.

Skating over thin ice; learning, learning, ever learning of the art of dissimulation. Humanity a stagnant pool into which fate cast its nets. The years flowed by. The teens gave place to the twenties, the twenties to the thirties and Fate fashioned personality; Fate drew up from

the pool with an absurd sureness just what was there. Just what the quiet Englishman, Wyndham Melfort, would have thought of him, he wondered once for a brief moment. Wyndham Melfort had been at Winchester; Melfort the old Wykehamist, with his motto, "Manners maketh the man." Not so, Vacla son of his impulsive mother. Tar sticks, adheres fatally. And training, the atmospheric influence of manner sticks intermittently piecemeal like tar. The son of Melfort of Winchester retained a spasmodic imitation of his father's manner, unvalued consciously.

"Extraordinary," said Isaacson puffing his inevitable cigar, "how Melfort always comes across."

"It is on the surface," answered Vinevar. "Superficiality. A pleasant and convincing manner."

But Vacla was embarked on his first offence. He confronted himself in the night court of home criticism. Why the devil had he done it? Once done, it seemed not only unworthy, but not worth while. His better nature protested. Isaacson had been friendly with him, and he had used information received at Isaacson's house to his own gain and Isaacson's loss. His

conscience lifted up its head. He looked for a club to stun it to unconsciousness. His chiefs were using him. As soon as they had derived what benefit they could from his efforts, they would dismiss him, dispense with his services, turn him down. He took up that club and with it he smote his living conscience on the head.

He salved his conscience and sped on. He had two spectres now to lay. The vision of Natalie, white, starry-eyed, with the snow on her lips, fleeing in the storm from something to him. That vision changed by him into a spectre watching for something promised, that did not intend to return. And the spectre of Isaacson kindly, generous, inviting him to a slice of the joint, and craftily being tricked by the friend making use of information to his loss. Two spectres now confronted him, to be laid by his new modern self.

It is the materialist who says what matters it whence comes the cloud so long as it rains? This was a new self that took for its adoration the hum, the roar, the movement of the city. Often he opened his window to hear it, the sound of the spending of vitality, that he meant to direct, to use eventually when he had learned what he needed to know. Sometimes as he closed

the window and went back into the room, the wish to have Natalie there white-faced, mysterious, starry-eyed, asking from him something he had not planned to give, sometimes the wish that he might come home and find her waiting for him, came to his mind, but he stilled it, with that new power he was developing of stilling everything that lay in the path of gain. Upon the plateau that lies between adolescence and middle age, he saw a flower, slender-stemmed, starry, bending its fragrance in the winds of life, a something precious, but he trod on it, and marched on. His plans, his intentions, his labours were his life. The manner of Wyndham the Wykehamist carried him at this juncture. "Superficial," condemned Vinevar. The apple was perfect on the outside, firm and rosy with not a hint of divergence.

His successes mounted, and with them the first fear departed. The thin ice held. As his moral nature weakened his material prosperity grew.

The hopes, the admonitions of his father were forgotten. He was swept away by an invincible rhapsodie of successful action. And yet he was getting very little in return for what he was losing,—stocks and bonds in return for chivalry

the imperishable, and honour, that priceless coat of shining armour.

The manners of the Wykehamist carried him. He had in a barren market raised seven millions.

The Princes of Israel were content, and Vacla was on the top of the wave.

PART TWO

THE CLEPSEDRA

“In the blood-stream of your body are quadrillions of little entities—so many millions in a single drop—whose total destiny apparently is to your life, as yours is to the race—and no more. They hurry, that you may live. They toil that you may smile, seek, yearn, blaze with ecstasy. A fraction of a minute each, and their little cycles have been run. So yours here. But do they know? Or care? Or do you? Aside from the smallest modicum of service, which you may render at top speed and with the utmost enthusiasm, nature has not the slightest care for you, or yours. Only the ways of life must be kept fresh and new: the illusion of newness and vigor maintained.”

ASHTORETH.

CHAPTER XV

THEN a strange change occurred. So far New York had been to Vacla a triumphant march; go further, say an abnormally easy triumphant march. Hardly pressing his claims in asking for co-operation, co-operation had been thrust on him. Success at first made him glow. He sensed the conqueror's pride in feeling hard barriers become plastic, cleave and give way.

"The young Gentile!" exclaimed Isaacson half in wonder, half in envy, as though perchance the non-Semitic race qualities helped in some curious way. So success crowned his efforts for a while. And then with an instability of purpose that is so peculiarly her own, Fate swerved widely round. A common obstinacy dominated her. Vacla with all his assurance could not raise a loan. Against this curious disorder of events at first, he preserved a smiling calm. He had succeeded so mightily. It could be but a passing phase. Having learned Isaacson's trick of quoting Scripture, he referred to

the lesson of Joseph and the seven lean years in Egypt. One could not expect success—prosperity—corn—all the time. There were to be the seven years of plenty followed by the seven lean years.

“It has no mysterious significance,” explained Vacla to Isaacson, “it is merely a misplaced variation.”

Nevertheless Isaacson, the old stager, took pains to confer with Vinevar.

Vinevar shook his head. “We cannot offer the bonds any further below face value,” he said, “but we can vary the denominations from one hundred, instead of having them only in thousands.”

Vinevar looked narrowly at Isaacson.

“I intend,” he said, “to raise the price artificially, on the pretext that everybody hurried to buy the bonds; but before I do that more must be sold. I counsel you, Isaacson, to get a list of the names of likely subscribers, and see that Melfort calls upon each one of these in person. It is necessary before I can go on in my plan, that more bonds be sold. We are a capable and energetic people appointing always the right man to the right place. If Melfort be the right man, he can sell these bonds.

On to Moscow," said Vinevar smiling, "on to Moscow!"

Thus Vinevar, the hand on the tiller, set forth his orders.

Fresh from his interview Isaacson compiled a list of names, important names. One he underlined, a man of many enterprises and much disposable capital.

Viewing with amusement Isaacson's anxiety, Vacla determined to interview this man of influence first, and having won him, lay the dust of Isaacson's doubts. He arranged an interview. With an exact sameness of attack he approached. Just in the manner that he had already raised seven million, he entered the office and conducted his interview. But this sameness had lost its original power. It was a race-horse stretching its neck at the sound, "they're off," laying back its ears, plunging with its fore feet and remaining at the post. His formula was as ever, but it refused to function. He extolled the cotton-lands, and his listener looked at him in unfeigned boredom. Something that had been alive in Vacla had died.

The great man refused to subscribe to the loan. It was a jar to Vacla, but it was not

enough to lead his thoughts to a revolution. It was, however, sufficient to shake very slightly his suave consciousness of power.

"I must be stale," he thought trying to explain it to himself. The refusal had been definite and peremptory. The screen ran on, and he chose to forget the picture of himself leaving an office, having been insufficient. But a consciousness was there as of something hidden, yet capable of spreading, something in himself that might destroy his power.

"I am stale," he thought. After a little reaction, a little amusement, it would be easy again.

Once more he saw a face, pale, dark-eyed, beautiful, and there stirred in him a ghost of warmth. If she were his, his to come home to, to gather up as his mother gathered him up, a drowsy boy! Only for a moment he thought thus, then he pulled himself together. What had he to do with such ideas? By his own deeds, he was placing himself further and further away from young love. No, he must fall into no such reveries. It was one of a piece with being stale. Natalie had not what he wanted. With her it was something that she wanted him to give her. It was not that she

had what he desired. Private aims underlie every act of life. That was it, to live for one's own aims. Nothing so great a trouble and anxiety that it could not be put away, forgotten in the movement, the glare, the constant burning of great Manhattan. Nothing so alluring that it could not be put away from the mind, except perhaps kisses in the snow.

What was it Natalie had said?

"Would he be happy when he had attained all these things for which he was working?"

Deuced funny, that kid! Of course, he would be happy. He was doing what he intended to do. Nevertheless, time and again the doubts that he could hardly put a name to, returned.

CHAPTER XVI

Now it happened that Isaacson, as he himself expressed it, "smelt a rat." He was one of those who always know when to transfer the dictatorship from the heart to the head.

"Something on your mind, Jacob?" asked Mrs. Isaacson, and laid a hand for an instant on his shoulder.

He did not perceive her caress. "It's a shifting of burden, Anna," he said, "shifting from the heart to the head." He sat thinking, recapitulating the trail of thought, that led him to suspect. His expression changed slowly.

"I am going down to Sunnytown to-morrow," he said presently. Mrs. Isaacson's eye travelled instinctively to the level. She saw Sunnytown. She tried to speak in an off-hand way.

"You aren't going to buy the grocery store at last?"

"No fear," said Isaacson with a sort of unwilling admission. "It has been bought already."

Mrs. Isaacson's eyes left the level. She crossed the room and sat down on the mahogany rocking chair.

"How do you mean, Jacob?" Her face looked a little sullen. The thought of Sunnytown raised an image brighter than anything else. The grocery gone was a drawing card removed.

"What I say," replied Isaacson after a pause. "Someone has bought the grocery store and the corner block, and I am going down to find out who it is."

It was a very solemn-faced Isaacson who returned to Manhattan the next evening. His blue eyes were paler than usual, and his tired face had lost its usual animation, but he didn't go straight home.

Although it was nearly dinner time and the joint was in danger of being overdone, he went to Riverside Drive to call upon Mr. Bruns. In his apartment in Riverside Drive Mr. Bruns lived with his wife, and his two children. In the card list of the foyer, he was entered as Mr. Samuel G. Bruns. In his office downtown, the information, "Confidential Detective," was added. He was a small wiry man with the alert quick movements of a ferret. His motto was,

"Be on your guard." This he said openly to his clients. His method was, "Foster suspicion," this he kept quietly to himself.

"I have a shrewd suspicion," said Isaacson, "that a friend of mine has bought a piece of property. You will find out if I am right. Also, for a time, I want this young friend watched."

Mr. Bruns noted the names and addresses given.

"It is bad to change horses crossing a stream," said Isaacson to himself. He would be glad if his suspicions were unfounded. His perturbed face stirred Mr. Bruns, when he looked up from his note-book.

"You can't take too many precautions," said Mr. Bruns.

In the background through a draped doorway Mrs. Bruns was listening. She hastily saw that the velvet curtain hid her entirely.

Isaacson rose and walked towards the front door. The training of years was uppermost. He had looked on Vacla, as a grown bird would contemplate a nestling. Suspect the nestling, and the grown bird could show him no quarter. His soul looked upon life in general as a trader. Let life develop complications, it was the trad-

er's instinct, the instinct that takes no loss until it is necessary, but when it does, stops the leak; that was Isaacson's. As he came out on Riverside Drive evening was falling. The north-bound busses were full. The downtown offices were disgorging, and the business man was going home to rest. The grey-headed and the brown-headed alike were going home. The north-bound and south-bound busses stopped under a lamp. The men on the tops looked weary as though the struggle were heavy. His bus moved on leaving the white faces, moved on past the sweep of a dark deserted cross-street. "Strap-hangers," said Isaacson to himself. "Strap-hangers." Thousands of them, going down every morning, coming back every night. His round fat body swayed with the motion of the bus. His face was pensive. "Strap-hangers." Pushing, shoving, elbowing each other in the ribs for the right to hang on and fight. The going down in the morning, each with his particular hunting outfit ready for the quarry. The lapse of time, and then evening and tired faces swaying in the dark. To-day but the eve of to-morrow, and to-morrow the eve of what? Thousands and thousands caught in a rut. Thousands and

thousands of slain hopes caught in the ceaseless traffic.

Isaacson thought of his winnings, the securities in his safe wrung out of the struggle, and no one to inherit them. Once he had thought of adopting Vacla, annexing him with a view to having him carry on; but there was the difference of race, and now things looked as though Vacla had done him out of a few thousands. A few thousands what were they to him, and yet the forces of habit hold.

"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XVII

THERE came one day to the house of Natalie's aunts, in St. Francis Street, a very "purposeful" young man, attracted there by what Vacla had termed to himself the "candle-light" in Natalie. But as a rule when a man comes to a woman, he does not think about her, he thinks about himself.

If Curtis Browne had shown Natalie a little tenderness, a little understanding, he might perhaps have won her affection. For men of his type, love is always reluctant of its dawning, but had young Curtis Browne been gifted with the gift of understanding, he might with patience and understanding have won his "ladye faire." He came, too, with the proper credentials, properly introduced; good prospects, honourable intentions, all of which he set vaingloriously before Aunt Anne, when he asked her in an accredited manner, if he might lay siege to the hand (he did not mention the heart) of her niece.

Aunt Anne during the interview was dignified, careful of the family honour, in that she made several objections and only intimated, that she might on some future occasion be willing to give her consent.

Always to Natalie, Curtis Browne had the unfortunate effect as if the wrong person had come on the stage. To herself, Natalie scornfully compared the newcomer with Vacla.

"When Vacla's hand takes mine, it loves mine. Curtis Browne's hand does not love mine," she said to herself.

She tried with what knowledge she had to fathom the difference in the two men. In Vacla she sensed passions, forces, emotions, that someone, perhaps she, might set free. In Curtis Browne she sensed not so much restraint as an absence of anything needing to be restrained. With Vacla life would be a play with big scenes. With Curtis Browne, the scenes would be hardly big enough to hold the attention of the actors, the stagnation of a dream without a dream's magic. Mr. Curtis Browne, however, did not think at all of the effect that he was making. He did not see clearly the features of the picture, that it was different from anything he had known. He

did not feel that something extraordinary was happening to Natalie, happening to him. He did not understand what love might mean to a nature such as hers, brought up by a generation once removed from its own, that its sweetness might unlock so many things heretofore untouched. No, he approached, sensible in every fibre of his being of the beauty of his own intentions, and conscious of her point of view not at all. And as he tried to win her affection by telling her how much his mother, his father, his cousins and his aunts thought of him, thinking that she would be impressed by the general atmosphere of intense esteem in which he found himself, Natalie looked past him into the shadows, where she saw in memory Vacla's shining eyes. So Curtis Browne not only did not make her any happier with his attentions, but he made her more definitely miserable, more definitely conscious of the sense of her desolation.

"If I never see Vacla again, I shall not be able to live," so she said at her baptism into the world where men seek their partners for life. Her thoughts of Vacla were like pilgrims wandering in a lost path seeking, seeking a message.

Vacla had won man's greatest triumph over woman. He had caught, subdued, conquered her imaginative mind. Having done this, it was safe for him to leave. The curious evocative influence he had with her remained to hide itself in every suggestion life makes: in the moon sailing through the hurrying clouds; in the scent of the rose; in every refrain of haunting music. Once let a man gain the victory over a woman's imagination, and all things work to his remembrance. When the sounds of the day cease, and the birds sleep and the flowers close, music and perfume and the silence of the sky will release her thoughts for him.

Natalie listened to the murmur of the voice of Mr. Curtis Browne, summoning images of the intensely obvious; his little peculiarities of voice, look, manner accentuated by the commonplaceness of his attitude to the world in general.

She met him at a Jance and liked him perhaps almost more than usual. The music, the movement, the excitement in the air helped to carry off his dulness.

Just before supper the orchestra played a new "fox-trot." The rhythm of it appealed

to her. She stopped near the violinist and asked him the name.

"It has a funny name, Mademoiselle," said the violinist. "It is called, 'Kisses in the Snow.' "

Natalie turned and made her way to the door of the ball-room.

"Take me to supper, Curtis," she said. "I am tired."

"Nonsense," he answered. "You look as fresh as a daisy." He put his arm around her waist and they danced on. Natalie's spirits were once more out of tune. How utterly careless he was of her desires and requests!

CHAPTER XVIII

EXPERIENCE, as the saying goes, is not so much a matter of duration as of intensity. It had already begun to appropriate Natalie. Nature primeval, unthinking set forth her inclinations. Conventional reality, civilized, calculating, set forth hers, and between them Natalie, the prey, drawn in one direction, advised to go to another. The Great Aunts were there, watchful providences of her simple faith, while Natalie was a prey as it were to her own candle-light, her own answering warmth.

After the night of the ball Natalie began to do something she had never done before. She began to idealize Vacla. Hitherto she had thought of him as a strong force sweeping on to its own definite goal, picking her up and sweeping her, too, on with it. She had thought of him in a primitive way as a means of rescue. Now a change came over her, brought about by comparing him with the dull self-sufficiency of Curtis Browne. Her idealization of Vacla

crept into her manner. It was as if something within her blossomed, called forth by this new glowing.

"Men are brutes," he had once remarked to her. "Don't you trust them."

Remembering it, she denied it, changed it to her liking; the stone once pushed back, strength not brutishness would be revealed. While she thought of his strength she was happy. The really strong man is a brave man, he plays no one false. So in her new experience, she reasoned that strength is faithfulness, though sometimes in the vagueness of her eyes there was a faint cloud of fear.

"What would I do if he never came back?" The thought would come unbidden. There was something in her that was hungry, unsatisfied, something which was not only the animal attraction of youth and youth, but something that stretched out to him, her weakness to his strength. And the impotence of Curtis Browne seemed to her his impotence to understand her needs. At once Vacla had known.

"You must be my little friend." So had he put her to play the woman to his man.

When Curtis came to press his suit, she saw only his stupidity, his blundering, his egotism.

There was an emptiness in her life, which he could never fill, and during his wooing she was acutely conscious of her own absolute detachment.

Her effect on young Curtis Browne was to make him admire her beauty more and more, but to show his admiration in a very unhappy manner. He spent hours extolling his own merits, his own prowess. It was evident to him that for some reason he was not exactly shining in the warm glow of favour. This did not make him change his methods, it only made him intensify them. When in a forceful fit of ineffectuality, he requested that he might be treated as a possible future husband, Natalie looked at him quizzically and said, "I'll do more, I'll treat you now as if you were my husband." And then she went quietly out of the room and shut the door gently behind her.

Young, hopeful Mr. Curtis Browne sat on the edge of his chair with an expectant expression upon his complacent countenance. He was waiting for Natalie to return. The half-hour chimed. The hour chimed, before it dawned upon him, that he was at that moment receiving a husband's treatment, and that Natalie was not coming back.

"I'll teach her," he muttered. "I'll teach her!"

He rang the bell. The young housemaid appeared.

"Will you ask Miss Natalie to speak to me a minute?" he said.

The young housemaid dropped her eyes.

"Miss Natalie went out half an hour ago, sir," she answered.

Mr. Curtis Browne looked sharply at the young housemaid, but her eyes were fixed on the floor. He could not ascertain if there was really an expression of amusement beneath the lowered eyelids. Mr. Curtis Browne stood looking very grave and puzzled for a minute, then he went out to the hall and with dignity took up his hat and coat.

Once outside, he allowed his anger to rise. He was a fool. She treated him as half-witted. He was angry for himself because her treatment of him belittled him in his own eyes, his own importance. Stupidity combined with egotism can kill any incipient feeling that might develop into love. He saw nothing of Natalie's point of view; that her aunts were kind and good, but lacked understanding; that she had no sympathetic, loving ear into which to pour

her doubts, her thoughts, her questionings of existence. He was a blind man led by his own inclinations, and he could only be angry with her for her treatment of him, not with himself for his own lack of understanding. Unconsciously, the egotistical attentions of young Curtis Browne were a constant reminder to her of that flame, that tiny light that was alive in her. She felt that everything in her life was trivial. Everything in her life was awry, except the ineffable, the mysterious ecstasy that Vacla drew forth from her.

"My Mother," explained Curtis on another occasion, seeing the light in Natalie's eyes, "wants me to settle down and be happy. Although I say it myself, I have been a good son." Thus he—not to give, but to receive.

It was then that Natalie thought of how Vacla had pulled her up against his great coat and held her close.

CHAPTER XIX

ON a cold morning at the end of the following January, a fact which had so far hidden itself from Natalie began to masquerade. It was Monday, the morning breakfast consisted of boiled eggs. On this particular morning only two eggs were on the silver egg stand. Suddenly, Natalie felt a conviction that this fact was important.

"Have an egg, Aunt Anne," she said lifting up the silver stand and handing it over to Aunt Anne. Aunt Anne helped herself to a silver egg cup, an egg and a spoon. "Have an egg, Aunt Clara," said Natalie with an encouraging smile.

"No, thank you," said Aunt Clara. She put her hand up to her hair and gave a little pat to each side of her head, a gesture which she always made when she was, what she called, "making a stand."

"But it is your favourite breakfast," said Natalie quickly. "Of course you must."

"No," said Aunt Clara firmly. "I must

"diet, I am getting too fat." She took up her tea and sipped it. As she put the cup down she helped herself to a piece of toast. Natalie handed her the butter.

"No, thank you," said Aunt Clara.

"How do you mean?" interrupted Aunt Anne sharply. "You are so stupid, Clara. You always overdo everything. Of course, you will take butter."

"Very well, Mother," said Aunt Clara, "I will take butter."

There was a hard sound in her voice. This episode in itself was a trifling incident, but it served to turn Natalie's thoughts a little from herself, and once turned she saw what she had not seen before. Aunt Anne was becoming more sardonic, Aunt Clara more patiently resigned. All Aunt Anne's little mannerisms, all her small exacting demands became intensified. Her life-stream seemed suddenly to become acid at its source. It was not only impossible to please her, it was impossible not to displease her. And as Aunt Anne's irascibility increased, Aunt Clara's blunt features gradually drooped and seemed to become definitely down-dropped.

Then Natalie grasped the situation, that the

Great Aunts were worried about money. Had she been their own child, even a grandchild, they might have told her. Being but a great niece, the sting of this thing that worried them they kept to themselves. Aunt Clara, the minor spirit, was driven by forces. Among others the force of Aunt Anne's temper. The force of her willingness to do what she could, over against her incapability of knowing what to do. About this time a new text appeared over Aunt Clara's mantlepiece. It was: "No cross, no crown." Its appearance coincided with a fresh outburst of irascibility in Aunt Anne. And there was a terror in all this, the terror of taut nerves, of a tension strained to breaking point.

"I can't stay on here," said Natalie to herself with a sickness at her heart. "I must make some excuse and go away." She forced herself to try to think out some plan of action, some method of escape. She had read many works of fiction and had often imagined that for love a woman could easily sacrifice the world. And now she was ruthlessly called upon to sacrifice love for the apparent good of her world, her roof-tree, and the Great Aunts.

She thought of Vacla. What would he feel when he knew? Shocked for a moment no

doubt. But after all he might not realize that there was no alternative than for her to marry young Curtis Browne. She had come to the conclusion, that was her exit, marriage with Curtis Browne. She felt infinitely tender over Vacla. And she saw him piecing together the fragments that he would hear. Two months after he left, Natalie became engaged. No word of her reason. She could hear the tones of his voice saying, "My little friend didn't stick to me very long." And a sudden passionate fury of longing woke in her to find out his address and write to him, tell him, give him a chance to marry her if he wanted; but just as swiftly she turned from the thought, knowing that girls brought up as she was did not do such things. It was unjust, unjust!

She had a strange, dream-like sensation of life in those days. She was not embittered. She was not crushed. She would become engaged to Curtis Browne, and even then something might happen. Strange that she had no pity for Curtis, no impulse of understanding what he might be feeling. On the other hand, she was very gentle with the Great Aunts. Great Aunt Anne's gaze followed her many times, and once she remarked to her daughter: "Poor

Edward's girl is certainly improving, Clara." That was their name for Natalie, "poor Edward's girl."

So with frost in her veins, hoping as many a maid has done before her, as many a maid may do after her, hoping that destiny would step into the breach before marriage became a fact, Natalie became engaged to Curtis Browne.

CHAPTER XX

CURTIS wanted to be what he thought he was, but he could not be. To him Natalie was an enigma. He could not make her out at all. Walking home accompanied by him Natalie smiled in the dark and thrust her hands deep into the pockets of her coat. He had given her an expensive ring. He had paraded her before his family. He was prepared to establish her in a house with all modern improvements in an expensive neighbourhood. He had, so to speak, accomplished his performance, what could any girl want more?

And yet there is temperament, there is emotion, there is understanding. They explained, or might have explained, the touch of bitterness in Natalie's voice; a momentary bitterness, that came and went apparently without reason, at least to Curtis. His egotism struck her so unpleasantly. It evoked a frown which kept in its place, and from under it her eyes stared wistfully. And the frown marred a little the

effect of her romantic eyes, her white skin, her thick wavy hair.

If Curtis had been older, he might have understood. As it was he did not understand. The frown was not a flying signal to him, that all was not well. It was merely something contrary to the direct wishes of a superior young man, who had in his own estimation complied with all the necessary requirements of life.

And so between these two there was not only lack of understanding, there was no real regard.

Better far, Natalie thought, Vacla's cruel neglect, combined with Vacla's love of the real woman in her, the hidden woman, that only he knew, than these assiduous daily attentions to someone who was not she at all.

And Curtis, on the other hand, felt the jolts going badly. He thought himself a fine fellow, a fair fellow, and yet never a day but Natalie made him feel that she thought he had somehow failed.

The birth-gods who handed out to Mr. Curtis Browne his equipment of temperament, of nature, of disposition, must have congratulated themselves in those days upon their gift of a very thick skin, because although he sensed something critical, hostile, he did not see it.

The danger to Natalie from her side lay in that he might wake up and see it. The real danger lay in the effect that outside forces were having upon her nature, her disposition. Vacla had wakened her woman's heart, and her quickened intellect saw that duty seemed driving her in the wrong direction.

Aunt Clara found herself wondering about her niece.

"Do you think that Natalie is happy, Mother?" she asked timidly.

Aunt Anne looked at her narrowly. "What makes you ask that, Clara?"

"I don't know. Being engaged, I supposed she ought to be quite radiant. I have thought her cheeks were losing their color lately."

"You are a silly old thing, Clara. Girls are always like that." There was an undertone of vexation in her voice.

But that evening when Aunt Clara had gone upstairs to bed, Aunt Anne followed Natalie with her eyes as she went about the room, doing the little duties that the aunts had taught her. Putting the chairs back in their places, smoothing the chintz, beating up the cushions, and when she saw that Natalie was looking at her, too, she said:

"You are quite happy, child, aren't you?"

Natalie laughed, a nervous little laugh, rather mirthless.

"Of course I am, dear. I have this nice ring, and I am going to have pretty clothes, and a lovely house; of course I am happy."

"That is quite right," said Aunt Anne abruptly. "A young girl does not always know what is best for her, but I think you have chosen wisely, very wisely. And I am sure that when you have come to years of discretion you will think so yourself."

"The wedding?"

"Curtis wants it in June, Aunt Anne. That is when he goes on his business trip, and he thought it might be wise to combine it with a wedding trip, and as he says 'kill two birds with one stone.' " As she said this, there was the touch of bitterness in her voice.

"That will be quite all right. The June flowers are always so pretty."

Memory swayed in Aunt Anne's voice languidly, as water sways at night in calm weather. Mysterious lights upon a forgotten shore; ships afloat in forgotten harbours, when woman reminds herself of the days that are

gone. Then an expression of practical to-day superseded the moment.

"You may tell Curtis that you have my permission to be married in June."

A faint colour rose in Natalie's cheeks.

"Something may happen before June," she said abruptly. Aunt Anne looked at her sideways.

"Nothing will happen, child," she said.

CHAPTER XXI

VINEVAR sat by the open window in the library of his country house listening to the boom of the waves breaking upon the beach. His little burning eyes glanced from the rug over his knees out to the sound that had caught hold of his imagination, as though out there lay those old ambitions and hopes forever haunting, forever hovering. His burning eyes were upon the distance as if for the moment he felt the necessity to escape from the resolute grasp of life. It was an imagination going from the light of day on a long dark journey, as through the open window came the unrestful cry of the sea, the throbbing and breaking of the ground swell of the ocean. And his imagination went forth to the sound of distant music in which the world seemed drowned.

He saw again a narrow street in Frankfort and a small boy in threadbare clothes, walking quickly, that he might not meet other boys of his acquaintance, but getting home from school as rapidly and as unobtrusively as he could

with his heavy pile of books. He saw this boy standing in the prow of a vessel with a few bundles wrapped in cloths and handkerchiefs, holding his cap in his hand as the breeze blew to meet him from America. He saw Hester Street. He saw Wall Street. He saw the railway from Cairo, the throngs of natives assembled to bid farewell to the Pilgrims who were departing to worship at the Holy Places. He saw the land that his people were reclaiming for their own. He saw the sheep kraals, the veldt and the kaffir huts. He saw the "Bourse;" the Kremlin at Moscow; the breaking of the roof in Russia and the hurling of the first projectiles of the revolution. Back to the earth went his imagination, and he saw the brown seed and then the living thing starting upwards. The brown seed with the germ of life, the dynamic force to push itself upward to the light. The atmosphere that the young life first meets leaves its impression, will not, in fact, leave it in a day. So Vinevar as he looked back across the past with his little burning eyes, reviewed the different scenes of his life of incident and much change.

You may divert the course of a river, but the water will find an outlet somewhere, and a seed

that is dropped in the earth will push upward to the light.

The curse of this great gift of travel, of having lived and sojourned in many countries, is that a man ceasing to have one country, becomes as it were a "deraciné," and his impersonality becomes too real. So with a divination, that drew from memory as he sat looking over the sea, he could summon at a glance pictures of the different countries in which he had sojourned. Vinevar had the world in his vest pocket. On the eve of 1922, when loans were being called in by the banks, Vinevar was ready to lend money to the nations, the money he had taken from them when they were at war. He was already a copper king, he was at present seeking control of the cotton lands. He knew, none better, the commercial rivalry of Japan and America, and knowing that Japan had got control of the silk industry, he set himself to make sure of cotton.

This day as he sat meditating, if one could have seen in his eyes what he was thinking, one would have seen his realization of the futility of the gifts for which he had fought.

There was a bird who did not like his cage, or his seed or his sugar; then why not open the

door and let him fly away to the forest? But when the door was opened, habit kept the bird on his perch. The taste for freedom had gone. And so he contented his soul with a few old thoughts, that he thought over and over again—The power to feel, the power to love, the power to crave, to shudder with jealousy, are powers that die with disuse. One cannot go to the forest when one has lived in a cage too long.

In the colonization of new countries the governments press for what will become loyal citizens, and yet the artificial outcome of transplanting remains a problem. Will the little Vinevar, scorned by the little German boys, bring his starved love of country to a growth when he becomes an American citizen? No. In every outward act of life he may be loyal, but just as a bulb sometimes puts forth roots, that become blinded by lack of water, and their growth arrested, the patriotism of little Vinevar may be stultified in the same way. The starving Russians, the ill-treated Poles, those flying from some open bleeding wrong in the country of their birth will never become America's best citizens. The seed that should have blown to flower has died. And yet pity them. The meaning of life to them is very close to the dust,

their final attitude a question mark. The charm of life is bound to fade out for them, as the grace of youth fades out of their faces. Man's first duty, his choice between the world and something which is beyond the world, determines any chance of happiness that he may have. The second duty and privilege of every man is to serve his country. In this he escapes from material reality into an ideal. He rises above the dust. He goes beyond to a very fine emotion.

The actions of loyalty and service are definite and may be performed, but the emotions of patriotism are an incalculable element. Emigration, the plant food of the new civilization of America,—emigration, the stream that flings itself upon the grey foam of the sea, brings to the new land many blinded tendrils of wounded patriotism. In the fertile black soil of some virgin furrow new shoots may come, but the blinded roots seldom grow again. The emigrants, the uprooted ones, the step-children of the nation, if they lack the fine quality of patriotism do not condemn them, pity them. They are what their lives have made them.

A girl came into the room. As she approached Vinevar, she touched certain objects

on her way, but she walked unerringly straight in his direction. Her hands slipped over the arms of his chair. Her light fingers touched his cheek and passed over his forehead.

"Your brow is furrowed, Father, what are you thinking of?"

"Restless futility, little one," he answered, "restless futility."

"Fie, Father, fie, when you own the cotton lands, we will have a plantation and in the evening we will hear the negroes singing."

Vinevar looked at the hand lying on his shoulder.

"How can you tell when it is evening?"

"I tell like this. In the morning the air strikes my face like this," she pressed her little fingers on Vinevar's cheek. "And in the evening the air comes so." She barely touches his cheek with the tips of her fingers. "That is why I like the sound of singing in the evening, it holds off a little as if it were shy. Don't be pessimistic, Father."

"Futility, little one. Futility."

The young girl nodded. "You mean me. And yet all flowers have a scent for me. I can put my finger in their little cups and feel the pistils and the stamens. And you can never

hear the tunes I can. Life is delicious, Father, quite delicious."

Vinevar sighed.

His daughter was blind and the priceless treasures he had bought with his great wealth, she would never see.

CHAPTER XXII

DURING this time Vacla's days were busy with organization. Days drifted away and he had to lose himself in activity. There was something that did not rest in him; something that pushed on for further achievement; the endless fascination to try, to see whether the thin ice would bear. There was a part of him, too, that life was changing. He would do what he planned. The ice would hold and he would go on. And yet—had he lost his power? The thought haunted him. There were those moments in life that halted before the stream ran on, reached out further. So he talked with himself.

He felt a revulsion. Since his failure with the particular mission on which Isaacson had sent him, it seemed there were mysterious things over which he had no control, moments when the functions did not "functionize"—a word he coined and wrote on his cuff.

"You are stale," said Isaacson watching closely.

To himself for the first time Vacla doubted. Aloud he said, "What does a man do who has become stale? How does he recover his freshness?"

"Régime of healthful exercise, food, and a training up of the body," replied Isaacson. "The body has its influence. Life is a flat surface. The surface must be kept highly polished." Such were his hints and on them Vacla acted.

He rose at six, took two glasses of cold water, got into soft woollen clothes, and walked at a quick pace to the Park where he ran for two miles. He returned to his apartment, took a cold bath and breakfasted on coffee, boiled eggs and toast. The two jerseys he wore when exercising, by increasing his temperature, helped to reduce his weight.

After two weeks of this he found himself more alive, more fit to attack his business appointments. He had not to work himself up to a point of enthusiasm after he entered a man's office. He arrived at a point of enthusiasm. Vacla had saved a name on Isaacson's list to attack later. It was a name to conjure with. The moment it was mentioned, men saw Trust Companies, Savings Banks,

Continental Railway Lines, Equipment Companies, Copper Mines, and Steel Bridges. It was a name like a wand that drew from the darkness all these things.

"A great man," thought Vacla. "I'll try for him." And with a quiet smile he betook himself to the appointment.

The great man sat back in his chair, the tips of his right fingers resting upon the tips of his left, his elbows resting upon the arm of his chair, his back resting against a leather cushion. His attitude was attentive but non-committal. The scene represented a trying out of personalities.

Vacla began with a good speech, explanatory, optimistic. He spoke simply. The great man listened without any show of interest. This stiffened Vacla.

"Unless I make good, they will throw me over," he thought.

He dug his spurs deep into his Pegasus. He had a flash of insight. He knew the great man to have the greatest collection of Rembrandts in America.

"The financiers of the New World are artists," Vacla suggested. "Though they do not draw with pencil on paper, they draw with

steel on the rock surface." The great man's eyes flickered.

"They create," continued Vacla, "they create their silver points, their pictures of their own. They divert the stream of humanity. They destroy old things, but they create new ones. They lay railways from east to west on shining steel, their silver points. They write and talk their pictures; many methods on a grand scale. The Socialist says the world is for all. The Financier knows it is for him alone. He makes his mark in silver point from east to west. The Socialist spreads the revolution. And with the rabble the Financier creates."

The great man looked up. Vacla had caught his attention.

"How much do you want?"

"Half a million."

"Ten year bonds."

"Gold bonds," replied Vacla with a smile.

"Put the dates of payment on paper, together with the details you have just made known to me."

The great man smiled. He was known in Wall Street as the optimist. He appeared in the familiar cartoons with a rounded waist line and an infectious smile.

"My railways, silver points," he said. "We create." He took a gold case out of his pocket and pulling out a card he wrote something on it.

"This is my address. Come and see me tomorrow at five o'clock and I will show you my Rembrandts."

Vacla walked down Wall Street on air. The old tricks did not fail.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHAT is the grand prize of the inner life? Who wins it? By what means is it won? Go to Shakespeare for your answer and he will tell you, "Will is unquestioned King." Mental discipline and perfect self-control had so far been Vacla's. Whenever anything stood in the way of his personal advancement, his will had stepped in to brush it aside, to summon whatever force could vanquish it, to vanquish any temptation, to allow some softer influence to summon the deeper instincts of his masculine nature.

Probably the last time that his will-power was unimpaired was in his interview with the Great Man. His will had so far held its sway over weakness, it now became true to him when he began to contend against goodness.

Life had become to him a ridiculous little kitchen-garden, in that his idea was, that his days on earth must produce a result. He thought of the high salary that made him satisfied to have worked. He lost sight of the

satisfaction he might have taken in the work itself. Industry did not operate with him, it operated against him. His natural bonhomie was weeded out. His sole interest became the kitchen-garden of money for money's sake. He drew upon his magnificent reserve of life and turned it into cash. Twenty-five per cent of the population of the United States is doing this, and that is putting it at a low figure. When one says the poisonous science of money-getting is laying low an immense field of little flowers, exhausting the energy of a quarter of the nation, one is not exaggerating. To keep a roof over one's head, to keep life in the body is necessary, but the manner of doing them, the style is the man. With money-getting a continuous phenomenon, man ceases to be his better self. The human group loses its power of cohesion. Disintegration propagates the deification of the individual, and before long he lives only to himself. The human group loses its power of cohesion.

It was in this spirit that Vacla planned another coup, a big coup to enrich himself quickly, a traitor's coup. He planned to give Vinevar's plans away to Vinevar's enemies. His ideas were stripped bare of illusions. He argued to

himself that all ideas are common property. Here, then, in the mere verbalism he gave himself absolution. Excuses become the first language of the transgressor.

It seems that the network of the human conscience contributes to the efficiency of the general individual mechanism. Vacla brushed this aside. He planned to betray his employer, yet met him with as confident a smile. He disregarded the possible trembling of some nerve, set vibrating by his deep unconsciousness and not subjugate to will-power.

"I am warm," says the man smiling, and shakes you with a freezing hand. When the tempter takes the Hungry City, there must be mutiny within. One of the greatest dramas of life remains to be written, the drama that shows the decline of a good man from one wrong act. If a dog wishes to bite, he curves his lips and shows his teeth, but when a man approaches with a smile to bury his teeth in human flesh and bite, he is embarked upon a moral downfall.

"I must be secure," Vacla said. And he embarked with insecure methods at a headlong and dangerous pace. He was not sure how his demands would be realized. Honour became a

sleeping Ariadne, his goal was an artificial heaven. Vinevar he planned to sell to Japan. So his longing for security, for independence at this immoral pace was bound to deliver him into bondage; the bondage of the ever-present thought of a mean action; a sulphurous phantom forever mocking from the fire; the bondage of the knowledge of having betrayed a trust.

Said Vinevar: "With my reservoir of great wealth, I will establish a great monopoly of cotton. With the genius of my distinguished mind, I will raise the price of cotton in such a manner that only my agents will benefit. Neither the retailer, nor the producer, but my agents. In this way I shall force the cotton producer off the land."

Said Vacla, flushed with success, his judgment distorted by his greed for wealth: "Japan controls the silk industry in the United States. In his longing to compete for American trade, he wants to control cotton. I will sell Vinevar's secret to Japan at a high figure, and become rich."

CHAPTER XXIV

Now Vinevar's great scheme was on this wise.

He hoped for his own people world government. When he gave the password All-Judaan to Isaacson, he thought of a state controlling all the governments of the world, a state whose citizens were unconditionally loyal, wherever they might be and whether rich or poor; a nation living among other nations, participating in their financial and industrial enterprises, yet remaining ever separate.

When Isaacson sat smoking in the evening, he pictured a perfect Palestine, the throne of David restored, the separate people at home at last. Not so Vinevar. In six months, he would have wearied of lending his money at three per cent and gone down to Egypt to procure ten per cent. The will to mastery was strong in Vinevar, the will to conquer, the will to hold. Isaacson was a Mazzini dreaming of Liberty. Vinevar saw a perpetual bondage greater than Liberty herself.

Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield, a man of genius, of loyalty to the country of his adoption, and of great foresight, once made the cryptic remark, "Every country gets the Jew it deserves." A fact obscure, perhaps, but certain.

Vinevar, the international financier, was a great man. His customers were nations. The world was his table and the control of the universe his stakes. And yet these things alone did not make him great. What made him greater than Isaacson, greater than Vacla, was that Vinevar worked for the ultimate supremacy, not of his own fortune, but of his own people. And with that motive behind him he added to ordinary life something, and watching him one grew to believe in an afterglow of grandeur. Life drew an element of deeper gravity. And the immensity of his purpose raised the curtain from the stage. He was a man to whom the great affections of persons to each other meant nothing. His genius was swayed only by the thought of material power vested in the hands of his race. He had no outbreaks of the spirit. Amid the mysterious charts of life, he turned neither to the right hand, nor to the left. He heard only one voice,

and that voice was the voice of the cause of Israel. He was not a capitalist interested in his labourers. He cared nothing for his labourers, he cared only for his cause. Life was a stream of humanity pouring across the world. The individuals went on over the horizon. The stream was fed by new forms of life. For the moment he was a cattle-driver, directing the stream across the earth. At the last he too would go with the stream.

Youth goes. The first wild ardour of the spirit goes. To the writer, to the poet, youth is the enchanted period, the day of divinity. But Vinevar had never been young. Even in Frankfort as a little boy Vinevar was not young. He was old with the experience of his race. And having never been young, as he grew old the thing for which he lived had come to life, so to his friends he seemed younger. His burning eyes drew forth their arguments. Life did not disquiet him. He knew it for what it was worth. He played the revolution for personal power.

"Things pass. Men pass. Men and women drift down the ages," so said Vinevar watching the stream of humanity drift over the edge of the world. He knew that life was in its essence

what he chose to make it. And he drew near to its uncertain moods, bringing to its bitterness his own knowledge of its futility and the meaning of its sorrow. Vinevar and life had nothing left to find out about each other. His aim was to serve his race, no more, no less. He bore to existence no illusion. Subtly, silently the treatment of his early days had gnawed at his nature, until hate had blinded him to all the sweetness of human companionship. He had been brought to bitterness by what ought to have been good and gentle and humane, and the memory of this bringing walked with him until in his soul was the scorn of all the world.

He walked as it were in prison dress. The moon and the stars had become darkened. Across the night he saw an immense blackness through which his soul would one day go alone.

In the meantime Vinevar, a Prince of Israel, served his people.

CHAPTER XXV

As he prepared to sell Vinevar to the Japanese, Vacla felt a kind of sympathy stirring in him for both sides. These small men from the Orient come to get concessions from the West brought with them a whiff of the far Eastern environment.

Entering the swing door of the Rex Hotel, where the envoys from Japan were staying, Vacla realised that this was already the third interview. It struck him suddenly as he stood waiting for the lift, that the man standing to the right of him he had seen more than once lately. Checking this fancy, he waited for the car to come down. Two cars came from the lower floor at the same time. Vacla moved as though he would go into the nearest, then passed on to the other which was almost full, entered it, heard the starter say, "Take the next car, please," and saw the gentleman in the tweed cap being shut out by the iron grating. Vacla sniffed, it looked as though the man were following him.

Vacla got off at the fourteenth floor and went straight to the rooms occupied by the Japanese.

Downstairs the man in the tweed cap waited for the return of the car. When it returned he approached the lift boy and asked him whether he remembered at what floor he had left the young gentleman with the brown overcoat and soft brown hat. The lift boy hesitated. The man with the tweed cap crossed his palm with silver, then the rascal grasped the situation.

"Eleventh floor, sir," he said. He put the man with the tweed cap off at the eleventh floor, where he waited at a point to command both elevators for two hours.

During those two hours Vacla had been bargaining steadily. He had held over the little men from the East the menace of China. He quoted: "If China adopts Western industrial methods she will be able to underbid you in all the markets of the world." He with the art of perfect salesmanship summoned to their memories the remembrance of cherry-trees in spring, the shimmering of fire-flies on summer nights, the crimsoning of maples in the autumn, just as though fragments of the Orient were brought over seas before their eyes.

There was a look in Vacla's eyes as he talked almost as of one forced to believe in the Karma of Japan in spite of himself. Skilfully without appearing to do so he brought his hearers to see in imagination what the control of another raw material might mean to Japan. He took this as the fundamental wish, as the basic cause of selling the secret, what had already been done in the matter of complete ownership. Then the soul of the Japanese which is a compound went back to the blossoming of the cherry trees, and his imagination amplified as it were until he was ready to raise his bid.

And this thing in Vacla that governed him so completely, this thing so arbitrary that it was determined to have its way even to the point of making him forget that the son of Wyndham of Winchester should have been a man of honour, drove him to put his scruples aside. It drove him to forget everything except that he must have money, much money very quickly. He must heap up money, dedicate himself to be a man in the chains of wealth. His love of beauty, his love of harmonious sound, his love of adventure, his love of romance, of all the sweet intriguing things of life, were being dragged down like some light craft that is

pulled below the surface of the water by a hand from the lower depths.

After long hesitation the Oriental intimated to him that if he could put Japan in possession of a train of facts necessary to obtain control of the cotton market, Japan would be willing to repay him in terms acceptable to him.

The mutual dislike of the Oriental and the Occidental was apparent in the interview. The compromise of Japan, which knows that it must conciliate and come to terms until it is able to do without the foreigner, was also apparent.

With the seeing eyes of the Far East, Japan watches the markets of the Occident. She takes their range of vision. She sees the huge monstrosities of architecture necessary for Western trade, its enormous enveloping capital, and she knows that with almost no capital, in houses, that take sometimes only three days to build, she has laid the foundations of a trade that America dare not ignore. The Japanese skilled labourer is able to underbid any Western artisan in the same line of industry. Without impedimenta he comes, and this gives him a tremendous advantage in the struggle for life.

Vacla went out from the interview satisfied

with himself and with his prospects, but mingled with his hard lack of scruple, his boldness that was smooth and polished, was a naïve crudity, which was in its lack of covering its tracks startingly like the ostrich, that buries his head in the sand.

Would the glory of his ostrich feathers betray him?

CHAPTER XXVI

IN a very able biography, lengthy as to six volumes, it has been said of the central figure, himself a Jew, that Will is the distinctive characteristic of the Jewish race. This biography points out that highly developed will-power tends to dwarf the imagination; that will sweeps on its object and makes for success; that the brooding temperament that is essential to high imagination makes for ineffectiveness and dispersion of will-power. Combine the two, will-power and imagination, and you have a man of genius.

Vinevar had the will-power of his race, but he had also in a great degree the quality of imagination. With a penetrating vision he tried for picturesque achievement. In a practical spirit he worked at practical things keeping in his mind the waving lilies of some halcyon dream. His life was a romance born out of a tragedy.

At the moment of his seeking for an interview with Isaacson, the old ambitions were rife

in him to this extent, that whatsoever he put his hand to, that he did with all his might. He stood for a moment; then he sat down on a high chair.

"Isaacson," he said.

"Well, Vinevar?"

"The fact that cotton is not scarce, but that its price is being artificially raised, has become known."

"Known?"

"Yes, known to those who would work against us."

Isaacson said nothing, and Vinevar resumed:

"It has made me think something though, Isaacson. It has made me think that perhaps Melfort is not playing square."

He leaned forward and as he did so, Isaacson's mind went to Vacla and he remembered exactly his own suspicions, that Vacla had forestalled him in buying the grocery store.

"I don't think I really knew it before," said Isaacson slowly. "I am sure I didn't know it, but I have had a suspicion. Bruns arranged for Melfort to be followed."

Again he looked at Vinevar. Vinevar's fervent and ambitious dream was rising in him.

It appeared in his face, like the reflection of a gold-fish swimming below the surface of the water, a bright thought lightening for a moment the weariness of Vinevar's features. Isaacson following the Zionist movement, slavishly at one with it, never knew for what Vinevar was working. The more simple Isaacson could not consider that the rich Jews are hostile to an idea which would take them from their positions of comfort and luxury. Vinevar knew that in the palaces of the wealthiest Jews are not found many Hebrew guests. So always the ultimate object of Vinevar's plans was incomprehensible to Isaacson.

Vinevar's glowing eyes fixed themselves upon Isaacson, and tried to read his thoughts.

"What has Bruns reported?" he asked.

Isaacson started.

"Nothing. I have been able to trace the reason of every visit Melfort has paid, except three visits to the Rex Hotel."

"I think you count too much on human nature, Isaacson," Vinevar said. "I believe it is a mistake to count upon human beings," he added. "One never knows what is going to happen."

"One must believe, a little," Isaacson replied.

"It all passes away so fast. I think one must believe in people. If one cannot take happiness and enjoy it, one must believe in people. Study people, but believe in them."

"And having studied," said Vinevar, "you will find that the reason of our wealth and power is our wonderful fitness in the face of heavy odds for the battle of life. The nations that are being destroyed by us deserve to be destroyed. Their weakness, self-indulgence, stupidity, want of proper education are the real reasons why we spring to office in high places. There are some races against whom we are powerless to act.

"For instance?"

"The Scotch."

"With our hand always on the pulse of public opinion, we know into what waters we must cast our line. We do not bite a file. Our success in Russia is due to the weakness of the Russian people. This young man, by the way, Vacla, is he not Russian?"

"His mother was Russian."

"This young man with a paltry, unmeaning outlook. Ah yes!" he interrupted Isaacson's would-be interruption, "I know he has a good manner. A good manner only. It is a pretty

flower pot without a flower. But I tell you he is paltry, working to have wealth. What does he know of the deep silence of the waste places; of the vast slopes of daily life; of the desolation of an unyielding fate? And yet this paltry man cuts across my path, I, who hold the thrones of Europe in my pay. I, who have worked to make New York the gateway of the great tax-gatherers. I, who with my moving pictures have formed public opinion from California to Sandy Hook. How comes it that this upstart dares to think independently of me?"

Vinevar twitched on his chair like a man supremely irritated. "The best people and the best things are never appreciated," said Isaacson.

"Appreciated!" Vinevar forced a kind of laugh. "Appreciated! A man who sees beyond to-day, who sees the responsibility of one generation to another. A prophet seeing in the fiery furnace of memory the forms of those who have prophesied before. A prophet seeing the isolation and advancement of his race being accomplished among the nations, seeing that out of hardship and discipline have come endurance and the will to conquer. A man with no thought except the advancement of the

ideas, that experience has shown him to be for the good of those to whom he belongs—do you think such a man is ever appreciated, Isaacson? Great God of Russia, Isaacson, not in this world, never!”

“You are jumping at conclusions,” Isaacson said slowly. “We really are not sure that Mel-fort has been the means by which information has become known.”

In spite of himself, he felt he was not convincing Vinevar. Isaacson the Zionist, the man of talent felt in Vinevar, the man of genius, depths that he could not fathom. He knew that Vinevar was often influenced, carried away by his one weakness, a weakness characteristic of his race, the spirit of boastfulness. Now he had no doubt that probably he had boasted of his power and enterprise to Vacla, boasted in a manner to betray facts. Influenced by his natural kindliness, he tried to pour oil on the troubled waters.

“Vinevar,” he said very gently, “if you should find anything wrong, you will spare Vacla. You will, of course, take precautions to protect your own interests, but you shall spare Vacla? You won’t be too hard on him.”

“Spare him?” said Vinevar indignantly.

“Why should I spare him? I, whom life has never spared.” The fierceness of his anger almost choked him. “Spare him? I, who have struggled against unpopularity and the brutal ignorance of public opinion. No. No. The work of long years cannot be undone in a day. No, Isaacson, Vinevar would not spare even his own son!”

A smile that had no brightness in it, a smile that was merely cynicism, flickered over his face.

“Tell Bruns he must watch Melfort, and report to you all his actions significant, and also those seemingly insignificant. Truly, Isaacson, I said wisely when I said to you not to trust human beings. He is a clever beggar. One cannot bring a man to law for merely betraying a trust, giving away information. And the inadequacy of the law makes us all law-givers, meters of justice. Many incidents in life are the results of accident, trust or non-trust among others, but the main drift of life is not the result of accident, it is the result of purpose. It would be a sentimental triumph if we could leave the doors of our houses unlocked, if we could have faith in universal goodness and trust our fellow-man. Only the

world would not exist. The world of the emotions, in which I forgive my son, and the world of fact in which he reaps at my hands that which he has sown, are two different hemispheres. Their courses converge, but never meet. Life gives knowledge. The wise man learns his own route. And forgiveness and Vinevar are like oil and water, they do not mingle, they do not mingle."

Vinevar rose, placed his hat on his head, took his gloves in his left hand, and balancing his gold-headed cane in his right hand, he made his way to the door.

"Good-bye, Isaacson. I am what life has made me, and what I am I shall remain."

CHAPTER XXVII

VACLA the unfearful was afraid of the shadows; the voices of shadows mingling with the light. And it was with a shock, the shock of a big gun fired suddenly within a few yards of him, that he became aware that he was being constantly and persistently followed. The disciple of Mr. Bruns was assiduous in the extreme.

Moreover, business had staged in his regard another tragedy. A man, whom after his interview Vacla had called "trumpery" had refused to subscribe; and then another, and another, and another, and another. Five in all successively. He was caught in the moment by a run of bad luck. Had he continued to bring large subscriptions to the firm, indulgence might have been extended, but again he was unsuccessful, and his functions would not functionize. To some occult change of the forces of fortune he always attributed the complete reversal of his luck. For as long as he could he was prepared to evade it. He tried

to persuade himself that it was only a momentary interruption to success; and it was not until long after that he began to realize that his failure to procure large loans and his failure to be loyal to Vinevar and Isaacson, were not two separate things, but were, in fact, two things whose pieces were inextricably entangled the one with the other.

For all his anxiety at this time, at times he enjoyed himself. He formed the habit of going to the theatre in the evenings, as he found himself too restless to sit at home. He liked to sit in the darkened theatre and allow the thoughts let loose by the actors to take possession of him. The spell of the theatre was particularly strong for him. He liked to read on his programme the names of "The Cast," the setting of "The Acts," and know that in three hours' time, if the dramatist had done well, the secrets of these characters would be known to him.

There was one play running in New York at this time that particularly interested him. In it a woman, young no longer in either experience or years, returns with the man with whom she had years ago run away, and lays bare for the audience some of her thoughts and emo-

tions, the things that love has been able to keep from her, and those things that love had not. Two promising people, she and he, who had wrecked the chances of their careers for each other. And again she asks herself before the audience if the question were put in her hands in the same circumstances with the years turned back, how would she deal with it? And turning to her companion, the man who might have been Prime Minister, but for his love for her, she waits for his opinion, whether it is better to go for love, or to stay without it. Whether the evenings spent with him on the Grand Canal in Venice were worth the averted faces of her fellow country-women in the morning. And he, her companion, the man who might have been Prime Minister, but who spent his life knocking about from one watering-place to another, because he could not take her back to England, he answers: "It is not what a man does in life that matters, it is what he is."

Those words, that were spoken by the actor with such conviction, stuck in Vacla's mind, leaving the impression, the wrong, but wished-for impression, that if he were strong enough always to be in the saddle, as it were, he could travel as he chose.

Then Ebbing, the old Doctor, his Uncle Nathan's friend, being in New York for a medical conference, came to dine with him, and somehow upset that conviction.

Across his own table Vacla looked at his guest, realizing that this gentle, genial, old-fashioned man was content to do day after day, not even iconoclastic operations, but to administer the simple advice of healing.

"Certain diseases," the old Doctor was saying, "certain diseases of the mind as well as of the body stamp themselves unmistakably upon the face of the patient, and the mind affects the body more than we guess."

The old Doctor looked at Vacla, not a searching glance, not scrutinisingly, but lightly, the glance of one so accustomed to all the phases of life, that only a glance is necessary, then with his eyelids lowered as he cracked the walnuts on his plate, he told this tale:

"I had luncheon to-day with an old colleague, a man who has made for himself a most enviable place in the successful treatment of psychological disease. He told me the incidents of one of his recent cases. It appears that the sufferer in this case was a bond broker in Wall Street, extraordinarily successful in

his profession until about a year ago, when he suddenly found his previously successful methods impaired. After suffering severe mental depression for some time, he consulted my friend the psychologist, presumably thinking that some physical infirmity must be undermining his state of health. Now in the cases of his mentally disturbed patients, my friend always seeks to gain their confidence. He tries to get them to tell him what it is that they have on their minds, knowing that the mere fact of telling, of saying out loud their heretofore fears is of enormous value to them."

The old Doctor paused and with the end of his fork prodded a recalcitrant kernel from the nut. "This case was a stubborn one. For a long time the patient volunteered no confidence, until one day after a sleepless night, followed by a very violent thunderstorm, his upset nerves lost the power of control, and he confessed. It appeared he had been very much in love with a young girl, in simple circumstances, but of decent upbringing; that he had betrayed her, knowing that he did not mean to do the right thing by her. And the fact that he knew he was doing wrong by her had so undermined his confidence in himself, that he

could no longer carry through successfully his dealings in Wall Street. That may seem strange to you, but it is a psychological fact."

Vacla moved as if to settle his arms more comfortably on the arms of his chair. It was a Dutch chair of inlaid mahogany and the arms were beautifully carved. He was proud of it. It was rare, and he had given a good price for it conscious that he was getting a prize.

"I suppose every day," he said, "these specialist chaps have people going to them with imaginary ills." He felt as if the old Doctor were watching him. "Of course," he added, with a raised eyebrow, "there is many a successful man in Wall Street without Sir Galahad's reputation." He spoke satirically.

The old Doctor's kind eyes were upon him.

"A man who indulges in small sins never carries through great ends," he answered.

Darkness had closed in over New York. The curtains were drawn. The shaded lamps were lighted, diffusing a gentle glow over the room, like the glow of kindness that emanated from Vacla's guest.

As he rose later to say good-bye, Dr. Ebbing stood for a moment looking round, feeling the atmosphere of the room, he who knew so well

how to take an impression from his surroundings. Here he sensed an atmosphere of accumulation, quick accumulation of things that had not had time to jostle down beside each other. An atmosphere of luxury combined with a slight sense of uneasiness, the uneasiness of too-hurried fortune.

Dr. Ebbing hesitated. In this security combined with strength and youth he felt his proffered sympathy misplaced. Then gently drawing his finger and thumb together across his chin, he took his decision.

"My boy," he said, "if you should ever fall ill, or need help, or advice, let me know. I often take a run down here."

He looked into Vacla's face, and his kind and enthusiastic eyes became almost piercing for a moment.

"Would you come down just to see me?"

"Of course I would."

"But what," Vacla interrupted quietly, "what would you get out of it? It would be wasting your time."

"No," the Doctor began in energetic protest. "To be able to help another is never waste of time." He spoke with a sincerity that was unmistakable.

Vacla put his hands in his pockets and shifted his weight idly from one foot to another.

“Down here,” he said “money and money only—talks.”

Doctor Ebbing looked at him, and seemed to take a resolve.

“There’s a better thing than money,” he said gently.

“What is it?”

“Time to leave a sweet memory on the Earth.”

At the door Dr. Ebbing looked back. “I forgot to tell you that Natalie is going to marry young Curtis Browne in June,” he said. “I think you will agree he is a lucky beggar. It seems just a short time ago that I used to tell her about little Red Riding Hood; but the young will grow. The young life pushes out the old, and the eternal freshness is maintained. Good-bye, my boy. If you ever need me, don’t forget. Medicine has greater scientists than old Ebbing, but no one is more glad to be of use.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

"FUNNY old duck!" thought Vacla to himself as Dr. Ebbing took his leave, but he noticed that he did not say it with scorn. The old Doctor managed to leave a kindly impression. Things had gone out of Vacla's life, gentle things, unimportant, unprophetic things, and Vacla glimpsed them as one watches the rose leaves on the eddying water, that one has thrown from the deck of a vessel.

He did not know whether it was imagination, but he had observed an unusual air about Isaacson. He thought sometimes that it was the thing that he had brought to life in himself, that Isaacson was observing the business trickiness he had developed of late.

"And yet I am just as I was," he said. "The resemblance is not impaired," but life disquieted him. Among the things that contented him for his trickiness was his new motor car. While looking at it and the hard blue sky, he was content. And then at intervals by devious paths his mind led him to fear. He was afraid.

Of Isaacson? No, but of Vinevar, the all powerful. At times, he was afraid that Vinevar would discover that he had tricked him.

Each day he strengthened himself by saying, "Unless I confess, they will never know that I pointed out the short cut to Japan. My will-power is supreme. I will never confess."

He measured the facts carefully. In spite of his luxuries, his motor car, his new antiques, he liked life less. Not consciously; he did not know it; but he had lost faith, the precious key that unlocks the closed door. He was never tired, never discouraged, but softness, gentleness had abandoned him. He was hard.

Isaacson, watching anxiously, saw himself shunned.

"Anna," said Isaacson to his wife one evening, "self is not enough."

"No, Jacob," she answered. She took it as a compliment. She thought he was including her. Isaacson's face was yellow and tired. He was kindly and he saw things going wrong.

It was at this juncture that Japan came to Vinevar with an open threat.

There was no light in Vinevar's eyes when he was threatened, but his slight nervous hands tightened a little on his knees. He had his

caprices, and one of them was that he tried to know everything about any situation in hand. He intimated that he knew all he did not know to the representative of Japan, and he realized he must make Vacla tell him just what he had told them.

It is said that the emotions, arrested halfway, are transformed into intelligence, philosophy, art. A notable part of Vinevar's emotions had gone to the making of a craftsman, a man halfway between a great artist and a great intriguer. And yet, diverted as his emotions were, he saw the value of everything in the world. Strange as it may seem, even the songs of the birds were not lost to him. He knew the value of the crowd; that successes are shaped in the street, and that the man who knows all that anyone knows about any situation has for the most part nothing to fear. So as Vacla feared sometimes the consequences of having sold information, Vinevar knew that if he could find out exactly the information sold, he could circumvent all action and need fear nothing.

"Life," said Vinevar to himself, "what is it? The exercise of our intellect in moments of despair. The test of our courage in moments

of apprehension, and the continuous idea of the advancement of our race."

His country-house was on Long Island, within sound of the sea. He thought: "I will ask the young man down to stay with me, and I will find out just what I wish to know."

He called his secretary. His secretary was not a young man. He was a man with a shrivelled face and grizzly hair.

"You will write a letter to Mr. Melfort, and invite him to stay with me for a few days."

The secretary wrote the name Mr. Melfort on his writing pad.

"Yes," he said. "The usual formula?"

Vinevar nodded his head.

"The usual formula."

The secretary sniffed. He did not like Mr. Melfort. He scented a man after him, put before him.

"He should be very pleased," he said. "It is good of you to have him."

"That is my business," said Vinevar sharply.

A smile came out on the old secretary's face, the smile of the English servant who knows that life may not be all beer and skittles. The secretary was a man Vinevar had picked up in England, a man culpable in a matter, but un-

punished and bound to Vinevar for his rescue, and for this in his yellow, grizzly way he was devoted to Vinevar.

"The association of ideas is not always with exactitude," said Vinevar. "Bring me the last reports, and see the letter goes at once."

The secretary nodded.

CHAPTER XXIX

VACLA repeated his resolve: "I will not betray myself. My will being in my own control, I will tell nothing that I have not chosen to tell."

Mixed feelings stirred in him as he drove along Forty-Second Street. The traffic stopped his taxi. The elevated train rattled overhead. The policeman waved his hand, and with a jerk the taxi shot forward. A typewriter sign caught his eye: "Why rent, if for five dollars a month you may become the owner of a typewriter?" Every time his taxi paused he read the signs in the windows. He saw a machine splashing its arms in soapy water. He saw people hurrying in every direction. Beyond Broadway on a cross street he saw a funny tumble-down wooden house of two stories beside a seventeen-story office building. The tumble-down house was occupied as a shop. It displayed the sign, "Auctioneer." In front of it were pieces of wrought iron in various degrees of rust. He wondered if the

auctioneer took them in at night. No, he couldn't. They were rusty from being rained upon. Then why did not some tramp steal them—these old lanterns and fire-dogs and wrought iron pieces? So his brain clicked, clicked, as he drove.

He arrived at the station, gave his bags to a porter, and was led to the train, a long interminable suburban train, full of people with packages and parcels.

Vacla's imagination ran along the tracks. He knew nothing of Vinevar's object in asking him to stay. He went grudgingly. The invitation was from his chief. He dare not refuse it.

Once or twice as he looked through the window he was attacked by apprehension, by what Isaacson called "cold feet." He drove this feeling away by an effort of will. He was master of himself. He would betray nothing.

At the station he was met by Vinevar's chauffeur. He had often seen him waiting beside the car, as it stood before Isaacson's office.

"Mr. Melfort, sir," the chauffeur touched his cap.

Vacla handed him his bag and followed.

"Anything in the baggage car, sir?"

Vacla took a cheque from his vest pocket.

"It will be sent up later," said the chauffeur, intimating that the car was too precious to carry anything heavy. Vacla got into the motor.

On the way to the house he rehearsed his part. He would be restrained and cautious. Who was Vinevar after all? A Hebrew. Powerful, it was true. Well, so far in a business way the lid had not been off. He shouldn't be surprised if Vinevar wanted the cards laid on the table. Well, he would not lay them.

He sat swaying upon the seat of the car, looking through the window at the setting sun, as if he were a crystal gazer, and the window were a crystal in which he might see the future. So he brooded, the car threading its way on. And looking at the luxurious country houses, he thought: "These people have these things now. Later on, I shall have them." In a queer outlandish way, these ideas passed through his brain as he drove along the concrete roads to Vinevar's house.

Passing a bend of the road that ran close to the sea, his attention was attracted by the seagulls' unrestful movements, movements that they make as they cry and fly when a storm

is impending. Another few minutes, and the motor passed through two square stone gates. As they drew up before a colossal door, the chauffeur sounded his horn, and the door opened quietly. Vacla got out of the motor and walked up the stone steps.

As he crossed the square hall, Vinevar himself came out of an adjoining room. A fixed smile was on his lips. It somehow made an unpleasant impression on Vacla. It was not the impression he expected, and it threw him into secret confusion.

Vinevar shook him by the hand, gave him momentarily into the care of a Japanese servant, and then excused himself, saying that he was having a business interview, but would be free almost immediately. Vacla gave his hat and coat to the man, and was ushered into a large living-room, a room extravagantly and expensively furnished by a man, a room with no chintz covers, none of those small useless things bought for the mere pleasure of buying, that are generally to be found in a woman's room. The room held as it were a dry and reasoned sense of a conservative idea, not always in the best taste, but unswervingly faithful to a fixed and elaborate purpose. Did

the elimination of all bibelots, all small and useless things in the room mean the elimination of everything that did not make for the main issues of a decided tendency? The hangings were dark. The chairs were of dark leather. The pictures on the walls were not light and sunny scenes of nature, but portraits of tragic, wistful and unhappy humanity. The man servant who handed him the cigarettes and the morning paper to go with this setting could have been no other than a Japanese. Two sides of the room from the floor to the ceiling were lined with books, and in the room seemed to dwell great qualities, possessed by the owner in an extraordinary degree, namely, strength of will and persistency of purpose.

When Vacla had smoked one cigarette and was about to take up the paper, Vinevar returned; almost as if it had been his intention that his guest should first get the atmosphere of the environment from the room, almost as if in the long course of his career he had become accustomed to allow inanimate objects to work for him, thus letting adventitious circumstances work for his own strong individuality.

Vinevar stood with his back to the fire dangling his glasses on a black ribbon. One of his

gestures was to flick the glasses on the end of the ribbon, as he made some remark.

“Ah!” he said, flicking his eyeglass and following Vacla’s eyes resting on a picture of a young man with a thoughtful oval face, “Ah!” said Vinevar, “you are gazing at the favourite of courts and kings. A bubble, as it were, of the wine of time, pricked at the last for serving too well his king.” Vinevar swayed backwards and forwards from his toes to his heels, still looking at the portrait to the left of the bookshelves.

“You remember Wolsey:

“O Cromwell, Cromwell!

Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my King, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.”

“Hein! Those words convey the meaning of that picture. The favourite of courts and kings, like Humpty Dumpty, had a great fall. Many, many are the bubbles of life. And it is only through his ideas and his imagination that a man lives beyond his time—lives on after death, in the thought movements of the world. It may seem to you a paradox. It is a truth. The key of economy is waste. A squandering,

appearing on a superficial glance to be waste, that is really not a waste, but a prodigal sowing intended to embody wealth in the future. The man of ideas and imagination is not looking to pluck the corn before it is ripe. He does not dare to shoot ahead alone with money. Abreast of money must go development, and for the results of enterprise he is content to wait. Yes, the wise man does not try to pluck the corn before it is ripe."

Vacla drank in every word that Vinevar let fall, and watched him as a dog watches his master's slightest movement. And yet he did not altogether like the subject of the conversation. It seemed to put ashes on the too vivid hopes of youth. His conscience convicted him. By an adroit turn, he switched the conversation to art.

"Art," repeated Vinevar. "What is Art? It is arbitrated by feeling rather than by intellect. In literature we have the hymns of the Vedas, the story of Isaac and Jacob, and two thousand years ago, the semi-savage imitation of the nude by the Greeks. Fashions, the manners of drapery change; the human figure remains the same. The test of the classic is that it appeals to all classes of all time, hence

perhaps the tearing off, the lack of drapery. In particular, I take it to be the perfect balance of body and soul, though here and there the Impressionists drag one in front of the other."

Vinevar dangled his eye-glass.

"The test of art, my young man, is its infectiousness. If you are reading a book and you put it down to see something more than the artist says, lurking in your own imagination; if you are looking at a portrait and you see not merely a man, but efforts, hopes, dreams, frustrated energies, disappointments and isolation; you are in the presence of art. Whistler's portrait of Carlyle is not only made great by the lonely crags in the life of Carlyle himself, but by the isolation that you and I bring to gaze upon it. Art is the abstract formed from the concrete. Art, great art, is not only of this life, it is of lives innumerable and forgotten. To-night I must show you my statues; I have a Rodin of marble. It is to my mind more valuable than bronze. Bronze may be cast. A replica might be made of bronze cast on a mould. Carved marble must be carved."

So talked Vinevar, the king of international finance—arousing, fanning in Vacla the thirst

he had never satisfied, the thirst of ownership for material things.

He and Vinevar dined alone.

"My daughter is not strong," said Vinevar. "She is not able to come down to-night, but you will see her to-morrow."

Vacla went to bed, his brain excited by what wealth may bring. Lust of the possession of beautiful things took hold of him.

Vinevar was certainly a personality, great in a small office talking to Isaacson, but greater at home surrounded by signed art treasures representing great expenditure and certainly authentic. Well, some day he would have some of these things for himself. After all, the evening had passed off very pleasantly. Probably Vinevar had no motive for asking him. He was becoming too apprehensive.

As he opened his window he smelt the salt of the sea, and when he was in bed he thought he heard the sound of the waves of the Atlantic Ocean breaking on the shores of America.

CHAPTER XXX

THE next morning after breakfast Vinevar took Vacla to what he called his "long room" (given this name on account of its shape) where he kept his pieces of marble, his Japanese prints and curios.

"Japan," said Vinevar, "deals essentially in things of luxury and beauty. These things sell in all civilised countries because they are the best of their kind. It is strange that Japan has never been able to paint wonderfully in oil. Ideal work is still out of their reach—I mean oil painting in the European manner—they have never been able to combine with their own methods of artistic expression."

Vinevar drew his fingers and thumb up and down the black silk ribbon on which he wore his eyeglasses. He pointed to the picture of a Chinese god painted on glass, a god holding a lotus flower. "Japan has broken down the power of China, Japan has copied the painting of that method, but that is essentially Chinese. Although," Vinevar added, "I have seen some

very good examples of painting on glass done by the Japanese."

For a moment Vacla had a battle with himself, a battle with caution. He felt in this instance it were better to listen than to take part in the conversation. But the scruples of youth are inevitably laid by the young and human wish to show one's own knowledge. Age lays her finger on her lips and says what she thinks fit. Youth with a fine gesture makes statements she would give her future to recall.

"I have seen just such a picture on glass done by a Japanese," said Vacla.

"Where?"

"In Oguri-Hangwan's apartment."

"Ah! you know the little man from the East. Where did you meet him?"

But Vacla had no sooner said that he had seen the picture, than he wished the words back. The shock of recognition, of seeing that the picture was exactly the same had tempted him. Had he betrayed himself? Quickly he sought to recover.

"I met Oguri-Hangwan," he said slowly, "in the auction rooms. We were both bidding on a particular piece. Naturally, he outbid me and I lost it."

Vinevar's eyes narrowed. He opened his lips and brought them together with a quick movement. Vacla watched him suspiciously.

"Well," said Vinevar, "you have met a most remarkable man."

Instantly Vacla felt relieved, and the air cleared.

For the rest of the morning Vacla was on his guard. He listened to all that Vinevar had to say attentively. He felt that from him he had much to learn.

At luncheon Vinevar's daughter made her first appearance. After luncheon Vacla was left alone with her for a short time.

Her face was pretty and had the wistful, eager expression of the blind. Something occurred which caused her to make an apology for her blindness.

"After all," said Vacla, "why should you apologise that you can't find some particular object? You have what has always been to me one of the greatest pleasures of life, the knowledge of sound. I expect now, you hear fine tones in music that pass me by."

The charm of Vacla's voice had always been one of his chief assets. He softened its timbre,

knowing that here, that and that alone must serve him.

Miranda smiled slightly.

"Yes," she said, "I am like an instrument, that responds only to the echo of sound. My father minds, but I am very happy, very happy. And my father always says I have a great feeling for people. He means that I see sometimes, what the seeing do not. Sometimes in town, in the crowd going to a concert, I hear someone say something to somebody else. Who they are, I do not know. I never see the face, but the sound of the voice brings a thrill of incomprehensible pleasure or pain. Dead suns, father says. He means that the sound reminds me of a previous existence."

"Surely," said Vacla gently, "it is hard for you, but as I said, you must hear things that we do not."

Vinevar gave Vacla a suspicious look, as he came into the room.

"You have forgotten the birds, my child," he said to his daughter. "You always pay them a visit after lunch."

It was Sunday, and during the afternoon Vacla and Vinevar sat discussing art.

"Ah!" said Vinevar, "you will be really sur-

prised at my collection of jade. I just need one or two representative pieces, and my collection will be equal to any in the country. Do you know anything about jade, Melfort?"

"I am afraid that I do not know very much."

"I wish," Vinevar continued, "I could find one large piece. It would not matter if the base were slightly pink, so that it were of sufficient size to offset the smaller and more perfect pieces. Now they say that the largest bit in the States is in the collection of Ratelli—Ratelli has the largest bit."

"No, he hasn't," interrupted Vacla.

"Why, do you know of a larger?"

"Yes, I do."

"After all," argued Vinevar with a sort of glum interest, "this man you know of might be tempted to sell. Do you know the owner?"

In a flash the thought went through Vacla's mind, that he ought to have kept away from the subject of jade. At so direct a question from one to whom it was impossible to make an evasive reply, Vacla hesitated for a moment.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I do."

"Who is it?"

"Kanéuji, of the Japanese legation," replied

Vacla, mentioning reluctantly another of the Japanese clique.

"We all have our little hobbies," replied Vinevar, after a pause. "Perhaps you can put me in the way of getting this valuable piece, put me in the way of meeting this man?"

Not knowing that Vinevar had had an interview with this man only two days before, and proud to be able to introduce Vinevar to any one, for answer Vacla said that he would arrange to have Vinevar and Kanéuji meet at his apartment.

That night, Vacla was really in a very anxious mood and notwithstanding the fact that he wished to leave a good impression on his host, he could not bring himself to be cheerful. The feeling of confidence that Vinevar was talking art for art's sake had left him. Vinevar had wanted to know, no doubt had planned the conversation to find out whether he knew Kanéuji and Oguri-Hangwan. Vacla was in a painful dilemma. He had promised to bring about a meeting. The pressure of anxiety drew near to his bedside and stood beside him that night.

On Monday morning he was to return to town.

CHAPTER XXXI

NEXT morning as Vacla was waiting for the motor that was to take him to the station, Vinevar turned squarely to him with a question:

"You won't forget now, that you have promised to introduce me to Kanéuji? I would give so much to have that large piece of jade, the largest piece in America, I think you said."

Vacla nodded.

With great affability, Vinevar continued, "Well, I put myself in your hands. I trust to you to arrange a meeting."

The car had been standing some distance off. The chauffeur now brought it to the front door.

Vacla turned to shake hands with his host. "I must let you know," he said, hiding successfully a kind of embarrassment.

He got into the waiting motor and waved his hand. As the car moved off, Vinevar stood watching it go through the square stone gate posts, and as it passed from sight, he swung his eyeglass to and fro on the black ribbon, and

nodding his head he smiled and went into the house.

Now Vacla had something of his father's balance, a poise inherited from Wyndham of Winchester; yet nevertheless on his way up to town, he was, to put it moderately, perturbed, extremely perturbed.

In the first place, he felt Vinevar had a motive for asking him down, and Vinevar seemed quite satisfied with the result of the visit, so if he had a motive, the result was doubtless satisfactory. And in the second place, there was a fact he, Vacla had hidden. It related to the piece of jade. It did not belong to Kanéuji, as he had stated, but was his. Kanéuji had given it to him in part payment for the information he had given. Kanéuji had told him to get what he could for it, as well as the sum he was to receive. It was an awkward situation. Vinevar had admitted that morning, that he had heard of the celebrated jade Buddha. An extremely awkward situation, it was. He dare not sell it to Vinevar, because Vinevar might want to know how it came to be in his possession. He must call upon the poise of his sturdy English soul. Only that morning Vinevar had said he would give a large price

for the jade Buddha. Vacla's cupidity reared its head.

The train rattled on. Well, well, thought Vacla, the visit that he had dreaded had turned out successfully. Why worry? Strong craft was ever built for stormy seas, and his was undoubtedly a strong craft. And just as on many a Monday morning on many a suburban train hopes had stirred again in the hearts of the travellers, hope stirred in his heart, an unreasoning optimism, born from the excitement bred by the multiplied life of the city. Worry indeed, why should he? *A quoi bon?* Strong craft was ever built for stormy seas. Let life send what it would, he would weather it.

And yet in this changed mood of his, this bracing of his will for effort and resistance, the fulness of life had somehow given way to a disenchantment. Music, which had so far been his most sought-for path in the realm of art, music even had momentarily lost its interest. The paper lay on his knee. Usually he looked for the notices of the operas to be given, and the concerts of the week. For the moment he did not care. The callous hardness of the material was overspreading his artistic soul. The inward revelation of good and evil was blunted

in him. That gone from a human being there is no proof of the existence of God, and a man becomes like the statue of himself.

When he had come to New York to start his career, it had seemed to him that possessions, worldly assets were the answer to the question of life. Now he had gone a step lower on the ladder, a step lower in the adamantine descent, for life no longer asked a question. There were no more discussions. There was no more moralizing on the changing places of the stars; their distances, weight and motions had lost their magic, as they must do in the unremitting quest for gain. Millions of men had witnessed them. Millions of men would witness them. His time on earth was too short. He was an individual fighting for his own rights.

As his train drew into Pennsylvania Station, he took a deep breath of gasoline-scented air, and prepared to plunge with all his youthful vigour into the struggle for the quick acquisition of wealth in Greater New York.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE more Vacla thought of the jade Buddha, the more he became convinced that it would be better to be rid of it. If Vinevar had any knowledge of jade at all, he must see that the bit was worth a lot of money. Moreover, the piece was marked in the sense of being impossible to duplicate on account of its size.

The thought came to him to tell Kanéuji that he was returning it to him. And yet his cupidity stepped in. It was worth a certain sum, and it was his. No. He must return it to Kanéuji, it was true. But Kanéuji must pay him.

Again his wisdom was put aside. Again his cupidity took its place. During the week, he managed to run into Kanéuji. He suggested to him, that he take back the Buddha and dispose of it, giving Vacla the proceeds. He even went so far as to say that he knew of a possible purchaser.

But Kanéuji rubbed his small yellow hands

together, "If my friend must sell," he said, "then sell. Kanéuji does not object. But"—again he rubbed his hands together—"Kanéuji has given something, Kanéuji has got something. It is finished. In the province of Sagami we do like this. We give something, for which we receive something, then it is finished."

Vacla flinched. He had not expected such obduracy. Well, the Buddha was worth a large sum. He would keep it. So the wheels of life turn.

And then, one evening after dinner, he took the jade Buddha out of its case and put it on the table beside him. His Japanese manservant came into the room to take away the coffee cup. Vacla watched him, but he did not appear to notice the Buddha. Vacla sat for some time watching it. Then he went to his bookcase and took out a volume by St. Amant on the life of Napoleon. He was interested in reading a description of Napoleon after Austerlitz, and of how the post which was distributed among the guards brought him a letter from Josephine. And he was interested in the very human touch, that in his letter from Josephine she wrote, "that some personage of the Fau-

bourg St. Germaine had refused to receive her." All the evening the standards of the defeated armies had been brought to him successively, one by one. All the evening the proofs of his victory had followed each other in succession. And yet his victory was all spoiled for him, by the little social slight to Josephine in Paris.

Vacla read on, intoxicated by the story of Napoleon's triumph. Vaguely, afterwards he remembered having heard the door-bell of his apartment ring. At the moment he did not notice it. Then suddenly he looked up and saw Vinevar standing before him, Vinevar dressed in evening clothes covered by a black cape, his opera hat still on his head, his white gloves and his ebony gold-tipped cane in his hand. Vacla started like a man who has been asleep, who suddenly finds the earth giving way beneath him. At once he remembered the jade Buddha.

"My young friend," said Vinevar, "permit me to put down my gloves and to lay aside my cape. I see that you have acquired the celebrated Buddha of jade. Vinevar is wise. He knows his world. He comes when the bird is on the nest. You have undoubtedly a better

knowledge of jade than of servants. My dear Melfort, you are delivered into my hand."

Vacla stood up. When there is a situation to be met, it is better to stand, than to sit. One is in fuller command of all one's power. It was strange, too, that he never thought of evasion, he never thought of denial. What he said when the first shock of the words was past, was: "Who gave me away?"

Vinevar seated himself and crossed his knees, as though he were preparing to enjoy the situation.

"My ledgers," he said slowly, "are well kept. My business plans are without defect. It became known to me that I was sold. I determined to know who sold me. Who betrayed you? Your manservant, brother of my butler, who has given you such smart service and made you so comfortable. Great God of Russia, Melfort! If a man has perfect service to-day, if his wants are all attended to, he should inquire into it at once. Let him look to his valet. A perfect servant nowadays is always a criminal, or a spy. Yours," Vinevar dangled his glasses, "happens to be a spy, sent here by me. You are new at playing chess with

human beings, Melfort, very new. It is a good game, but it needs practice."

Vacla felt sick and faint at this disclosure, but he did not defend himself.

Vinevar went on:

"The end of the game, my dear Melfort, is evidenced by one sign. The cards of one or other must be laid upon the table. In this case, it is you who lay the cards upon the table."

Again Vacla made no comment.

And as he continued, Vinevar's voice assumed a less bantering and more serious tone.

"It became clear to me that some of my most valuable business secrets had been made known to Japan." Vinevar's terrible eyes travelled around the room. "They could only have been betrayed by someone with intimate knowledge of my affairs. I never doubted Isaacson. They could only have been betrayed by one, other than my own race. Suspicion fastened itself on you. Kanéuji told me he had given you the jade. 'Nothing for nothing' is the motto of Japan. That was enough. I told my spy, your servant, to let me know when you had the jade in your room. It was a dramatic method of confronting you with the situation, and I have a great sense of the dramatic."

Vinevar smiled. "To-night he telephoned. And I am here. In future, Melfort, you must choose your servants more wisely."

Vinevar paused and looked at Vacla like an orator, who is about to stagger his audience.

"Do not shrink, Melfort. The brand of evil-doing is on the heart, before it is on the shoulders. You say nothing. No hurry, because what I want to know, you will tell me."

There was a sound of something banging. It was the wind in the courtyard rattling the window.

For the first time Vinevar fastened his eye on Vacla.

"Just what you have told the little Orientals, word for word, I must know, so that I will know how to frustrate their actions. According as you tell me, word for word, I will deal with you."

Vacla turned his eyes eagerly to the rattling window. Beyond it lay the glitter of great Manhattan, but to it there was no escape.

"If you don't tell me the truth, word for word," said Vinevar, "you will live to wish that you had died when you were born."

These words broke Vacla's silence, and keeping his nerve as best he could, he told the exact

story, eyeing Vinevar the while askance, unsteady and unflinching.

Vinevar listened quietly and attentively. It was only as he neared the end of his recital, that Vacla saw his face quiver ironically.

"How dared you?" he asked when Vacla had finished. "How dared you?"

Afterwards, on looking back over the interview, Vacla often wondered why, at this juncture, he had not picked up Vinevar by the shoulders and put him out. The game was undoubtedly up. Then why had he not done it? Vinevar's mentally hypnotic influence must have held him in check. Nothing short of a miracle could extricate him now, and the miracle did not present itself.

Something in Vinevar's face, in the sudden uncrossing of his knees, in his rising to his feet, told Vacla that Vinevar had no doubt that he had told him the truth.

Vinevar stood dangling his eyeglass.

"Folly," said Vinevar, "absolute folly!"

Vacla stared.

"The results of my labours are not yet." Vinevar cleared his throat. A look of rage passed over his face. "There remains but little to add," he continued. "Except perhaps to

impart to you the secret which governs all Jewish enterprise. It is a secret that I tell you, because I wish it made known." Vinevar smiled scornfully.

"The Gentiles complain that as a race we become too powerful. Now the secret of our power is that we put the race above the individual. Rich and poor, always we give the preference to each other. We have the greatest modern power—gold. But it is always ready for the benefit of our own people. In a few days, we can get it from our treasuries in any desired quantity. And my answer—Vinevar's answer to the Gentile questioning of Jewish power is this—when at the hands of the nations the Gentiles have been disciplined, I put it mildly, as we have been disciplined; when the Gentiles are as unrelenting of their labour, as assiduous in their studies, as broad in their vision, as loyal to each other, the Gentile will then be as powerful as the Jew. We, the Jews of America, like the Jews of all countries, are what the nations have made us, but our rule is decreed by God."

Vinevar continued in a more quiet tone.

"I cannot set forth in detail my point of view, I can only direct your attention to the

absurdity, that my schemes, or my prestige could be imperilled by anyone so undisciplined, so pleasure-loving as you are. There is a strength that is greater than metal, the strength of an unswerving purpose. My own life is nothing to me. Personal happiness, a point of view too late for me to understand. Fool that you are, to try to cross my path! Vengeance? No, I take no vengeance. I leave you to live your life on this earth," Vinevar smiled bitterly, his upper lip drawn across his teeth, "I can think of no greater punishment. But when discussion turns upon the Jew; when around your dinner tables is asked the question whether the Jew makes a good citizen; then, Melfort, open your mouth and ask them how we can be citizens, who have been denied citizenship? Tell them we are powerful because by their discipline we have become strong, and that our rule is decreed by God."

Vinevar put on his cape. He put on his hat. He took his cane and his gloves.

"It is an old battle," he said. "Gentile versus Jew. In this instance, the Jew wins and I have overcome mine adversary." He walked towards the door. Halfway, he turned. "The comedy has been played before with a

different ending. Scattered and dormant Israel has been oppressed too long."

With these words Vinevar passed into the hall.

All this time Vacla had said nothing.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE clouds that had gathered so rapidly had broken at last; and when Vinevar left, Vacla sat down beside the table, and said to himself: "In twenty or thirty years, I shall certainly have outlived this, I shall have lived this down," but although he said the words out loud, they did not comfort him. Not only were his prospects wrecked, but he was still afraid of what Vinevar might do to avenge himself, and his pride was hurt. And as he sat through the night watching the curving lips of the Buddha, he thought what a fool he had been!

What would come to him now? Life would form independently of his will. Vinevar's scorn of him had raised a fierce resistance, but as the night wore on, his anger spent itself and reacted to low spirits. He had, as it were, followed his own furrow. He had struck out in life meaning to work for himself alone. He had not cared for peace, or tradition, or gentle things, and now he was caught with his own weapons.

For hours, he stared at the Buddha. The evidence was against him, and he had given himself away. The disgrace—that made him suffer. Even the individual, who seeks his own fortune and goes his own way, cannot live, if he live in the world, unmindful of the opinion of his fellow-men. Sick with anxiety, he sat through the night. What would Vinevar do? What would Vinevar tell? Vinevar had said that he would leave his punishment to fate, but would he? He thought of the story that might travel to his uncle, of its bearing on the opinions of those who knew him. Isaacson, of course, would never forgive him, and at times he had liked old Isaacson when he patted him on the arm and called him “My Boy.”

“Keep one’s head,” he thought, “even now, keep one’s head.”

He got up and went blindly towards the window. He struck the end of the sofa and hurt his knee. He looked round the room as if for the first time. He would have to leave his apartment, sell his furniture, get rid of the damned Jap. He wished that he would come in, he would have liked to strangle him, but probably he had gone home for the night. No shelter, no protection, no love in life.

He did not think of Natalie in this hour, nor of his father, the queer, reserved Englishman, but he thought of his mother; the perfume and warmth and strength of her, as he remembered her when he was a little boy. He threw himself down on the sofa and said her name, first softly and then out aloud. And as he said it, it seemed as though her presence gained on him. He put out his hand, palm upwards, so that if she were there she would take it.

He opened his eyes and saw nothing, but the silver streak of dawn outlining the frame of the window. Doggedly the dawn pierced its way through the space under the blind. Doggedly its light battled with the light of the still burning sconces, bringing with it neither comfort nor pity. And Vacla, hating the thought of the coming day, saw it. He passed the palm of his hand over the cool surface of the silk cushion.

"Mother," he said again out loud, "O, Mother!"

* * * * *

Where are the dead, that they hear no cry?

PART THREE

THE HERD

The window itself is dark—

But see!

A firefly is creeping up the paper pane.

—*Japanese Poem.*

CHAPTER XXXIV

BESIDE his window looking out on the courtyard, Vacla spent most of his days. He caught glimpses of people in the apartment house opposite, shadows behind muslin curtains; life as it were behind a veil, and then in the morning the turning on of artificial light, a decisive silhouetting of the shadows and the blinds drawn down.

If a man takes too much of a strong medicine it stirs his liver and dispels a poison throughout his system, that should be localized. And if a human being be given a dose of too much adverse circumstances, an acid is released that colours in a gloomy way his point of view. Vacla looked out and he saw faces drifting in the windows opposite, like fish in an aquarium, or mermaids in the sea; caged faces, in glass cases far away from the hypaticas blooming in the woods, the violets flowering unseen, and the throaty songs of the robins after the rain.

He never remembered what he did in those days, but he remembered what he thought.

Something had come to life in him, something sad and lonely and aching, that might some day be greater than any feeling that had as yet dominated him. Something that in its worst phase has a frayed collar and a leaking boot; something that in its best phase passes its fingers through the stars. The consistently righteous have little need of encouragement. They go quite naturally along a wide road where the sun is always shining. They need as it were no God. But the confused gleam of the stars is to the man to whom night has come. Between these two types, the righteous man and the sinner, lies the whole range of life. The righteous judge life from the high noon and the broad way. There is no shading. There can be no excuse. There is the test of a high light on the smallest action. But the sinner is a man of the shadows. Night has come. The test was proffered and he was found wanting in the strength of resistance. He is looking for the darkness, for forgiveness and the stars. All men are capable of transgression, but only the sinner is capable of receiving forgiveness. It is a quality that presupposes suffering. It is the dew that lies on the flowers when the night is over. The right-

eous have no need of encouragement, their righteousness is in itself a coat of mail securing them from the chance arrows of fortune. Righteousness is a quality, but sin is an essence, a poisonous essence of the soul scenting opposition and criticism and condemnation to be as relentless as righteousness itself. To the righteous man life is flattery and praise, death a stepping into a larger space where he will receive more flattery, praise and happiness. The sinner connects the idea of nothingness with the idea of death. He becomes nothing, less than that is, than he is and then he ceases to exist. He passes into the night, the part of time that is his and the darkness claims him.

Vacla sat by his window thinking of things as they are. The expression of his face had changed, it was no longer sunny, his lips no longer smiled. Expression is the mirror of a man's habitual mood. If a man has been pressing with all his force in one direction only to find his efforts frustrated, his goal impossible of attainment, he has to shift, as it were, the weight of his existence; to change one urge for another urge. Only according to his power successfully to accomplish this, is his readjustment possible, but the process of shifting is

difficult, extremely difficult. Vacla had been accumulating wealth quickly, along a given line. Wealth was no longer possible of accumulation to him along this line. His income had with suddenness stopped. A new tenant would soon take over the lease of his apartment. A new tenant would sit at the window watching the shadows on the blinds opposite. His furniture would be sold, and he must begin life again from some new angle, a man beaten in the first round. The gods give ignorance for the first round, security, confidence of a man in himself and a lack of realizing the possible adverse combinations of life. Men and women many of them have pushed through with ignorance as their greatest card. But when that goes, although a man has gained in experience, there is a doubt in his heart that was not there before, it is the fear that comes with knowledge of the possible combinations that may exist in life. Powerful though the man may be, the urge is not so great as in the day of his ignorance, when he had no imagination of the things which may oppose him. And so the shapes of the imagination which the righteous, the busy, the partially successful do not suspect creep in upon the failure. In an ever-

tightening circle, he sits down as it were to interpret the scenes among which he has grown.

The hours of the clepsedra, the water-clock, are drops in the ocean of time. Individual life is to collective life like drops in the ocean.

Tick — tick, tick — tick, went the minutes past Vacla, the man who had lost his position by being dishonorable, through not playing the game. Millions and millions of drops in the ocean swelling the tide, drawn up by the power of the sun to return upon the earth again. Vacla was brought to the few old thoughts of life. Why we are here and what we are doing and where we will go when it is over. The race for money has one great point in its favour, one thing you must say for it whether you will or no, and that is, that activity precludes thought. When a man is racing after money, he has no need of a compass, for he has no time to take his bearings.

“Wings,” said Vacla to himself, “that’s what I want, wings, something to lift me out of this level where I find myself.” He went over to the bookcase, took out the dictionary and looked up the word, “wing.” The definition was, “An organ of flight.” Yes, he wanted wings, and he must be going, moving on to the next phase,

one of those varied and successive phases that argue the passing of time. On past the known sign posts to new ones. Life still an adventure, by reason of the possibilities argued by change. That man is not alone who has ambition, his ambition is always with him. It may as long as the illusion is preserved be the chief motive of his being, but in its silent wintry hours, it has no solace of remembered loving deeds, ambition has had time to still no cry.

Over and over Vacla repeated to himself that he had been a fool. At first he waited for Isaacson to come to see him to upbraid him. With Isaacson he was prepared to defend himself, but Isaacson never came. His prison though was opening. Say rather one cell was taking the place of another. The last day and the last evening in his apartment came and went, and with its going came the day when he piled his bags on a taxi and drove uptown to a room which he had taken in a boarding house. The new tenant was to take possession of his apartment in a week. During the week his furniture which had been sold was to be removed.

Activity, momentum, action, movement keep some natures going. As long as there is some-

thing to be done, as long as action is possible, they are brave, they keep up, their spirits are even heroic. That is the character born of the active life, meeting a trial of nerve. Then comes a crisis, the step up in trial when the discipline of the inner life is needed to give strength. This the man of action has had no time to acquire. The knowledge of self, necessary to navigate in stormy waters, has never been cultivated. This is the cataclysm for the man of action, his blank wall, that action is no longer possible. In his ears has always been the sound of bustle and hurry. He wants it to continue. He is afraid of the stillness inside himself; a quietness hidden and spreading like the stillness before the Creation when the Earth was without form, and void, and darkness overspread it. There was no fact in Vacla now, but this haunting quiet, this stillness that had begun in him and was spreading through his being. It is the ether of life at its source, and in it the spirit rests ere it begins to grow.

CHAPTER XXXV

IT was strange how the outward appearance of Vacla's life differed, from the day when he had the security of a fixed income and a given position. Certainly worldly appearances are not kept up without a corresponding expenditure, and dignity of life is mostly resultant of an expenditure of money. As against the man of property the socialist plays for the most part a losing game, the man who does not back himself up with the ideas of a socialist a lost game. In his cynicism Vacla mocked at the socialists, the men who pretended they wanted nothing, because they had nothing.

It was because he failed, during the weeks of idleness, to realize the ever shifting scenes of life. Deliberately he had gone to the boarding house as Mr. Max Ecstein. He dropped his name, and as Mr. Max Ecstein he seemed to have no wish to make the best of life. With the regularity of a loafer, he drifted out to the park and watched the children feeding the squirrels, or playing with their hoops, or eyeing other

children as children do. He was grateful in the morning, that he had made the choice of a refuge, and he went to the park with the regularity of a man going to his office, a regular, unimaginative habit.

At last there came a day when he departed from his regular routine. He had read in the Sunday paper that the "Blue Boy" was to be exhibited in one of the better known galleries, and he felt for a moment the interest of a man who has wished to become a collector. With an assiduity as pathetic as it was absurd he dressed himself more carefully, as though bidden to this exhibition, and walked downtown to see the picture. As he turned to go into the building, he heard someone call him by his name, "Melfort!"

"An acquaintance," he thought. "What shall I do? Pretend not to hear?" But again he heard the name Melfort and felt the pressure of a hand on his arm. He turned and faced Kanéuji. Kanéuji was nodding to him familiarly. In old Japan the merchant ranked below the common peasant. Did this scorn of trade still lurk in the man who was engaged in the furthering of the trade of Japan?

"Well," he said taking Vacla by the arm,

"I have not seen Mr. Melfort for some time. Where has he been hiding?"

Vacla looked abstractedly at Kanéuji's tie, his mouth gradually shut hard in a line. Behind them was the phosphorescent life of the city. The roar of motor cars, the power jerked on and off. Vacla heard it, but he was still staring at Kanéuji's tie.

"Lunch with me to-morrow," said Kanéuji, "at Pierre's, at one o'clock. The music is nice. The food is good. I have something to say."

Vacla was on the point of refusing until the last remark. But the habit of making the most of opportunity made him accept before he realized what he was doing. As though by mutual instinct they parted saying no more. What was to be said would wait until to-morrow.

That day he was more at peace with himself than he had been. Kanéuji had evidently heard nothing. It argued well for the rest of the world. And in a strange way he felt compensation, that his life had been affected by wide spheres. He had been caught in the ambition of Japanese world trade control schemes. Life passes from the known to the unknown. The big undulations drawing in the crowd had

caught him. And it occurred to him how the big events of life draw on the lesser lives of those on its outer circle, and of how every movement affects the lives of those near to it. The big undulations of life draw the crowd, just as the war penetrated into the sequestered lives of the most humble. But although Vacla was more content there was that dark, strained look in his eyes as if he were hunting something. And yet there was nowhere to go, neither back, nor forward. He grew thin and lantern-jawed. When he caught sight of himself in a shop window or a looking-glass he tried not to look. He wanted a refuge, a destination. He wanted to get away from himself, but there was nothing to get hold of. It was spring. There was the uplift in the air, the buoyancy in the sky as if it were rising. He saw a young man meet a girl as if he had put his hope in her. A sallow-faced young clerk and an unattractive girl, untidy, heels down-trodden, no gloves, but slight she was and young and eager. Two dreadfully mediocre people, but interesting on account of their eagerness for each other.

"Perfection," said Vacla, "is death." He might have added, "so is boredom." Only

eagerness, keenness, desire are life, intense life. The wish for someone or something, that makes the sun rise; that makes the world go round.

As he looked at the sallow-faced young clerk and the little down-at-heel stenographer, become interesting on account of their rapture, their enthusiasm, Vacla suddenly thought of Natalie. A warm strong feeling for her came up in him. Would she be strong enough, big enough to keep his interest? He wanted a destination, someone to depend on. In his thoughts this someone had been always his mother. He had this sudden, flaring hope, that Natalie might grip him, might hold him from the eddies, the whirling currents, that attract the disillusioned and the unsuccessful.

People were coming and going up and down Fifth Avenue, dark figures against a moving background, wandering in a blind way through the endless traffic. The traffic, the struggle, what was it all for? Now that he had nothing to do, he was thinking of them, these people in the maelstrom of existence. Still there was a common gesture, an impulse to be found in rich and poor, in the learned and the unlearned, in those who believed in the hereafter, and those

who did not. He watched, and one and all clutched at personal happiness. Far away was the clinking of time, the going over the horizon, the end of life, but one and all tried to be happy once for a moment. It was the common instinct of humanity.

He was rather excited at the idea of lunching with Kanéuji on the morrow. He would be disappointed if the interview brought forth nothing.

"Yes," said Vacla, "I will see him, and if he doesn't explain I will wring his throat."

CHAPTER XXXVI

EACH day, each moment of life speaks a new thought, brings a new message, and we do not know to-day what views we may hold to-morrow. It is this plastic character that makes it impossible to get a conception of life from any book.

On the morrow Vacla met Kanéuji at Pierre's, but the orchestra although good was loud, and the tables were filled, and the noise of the music and the chatter of voices made it impossible to carry on a serious conversation.

Kanéuji suggested that Vacla return with him to the office, his sitting-room at the hotel which he was pleased to call his office.

As they got into the taxi, Kanéuji laughed. "Why do you laugh?"

"I see Vinevar," said Kanéuji. "Although it is April he is covered with a sable rug. That man is always cold. It is a coldness of the temperament."

At the name Vinevar, Vacla appeared nervous though he tried to seem unmoved.

Kanéuji watched him. "How clever he is," thought Vacla, "he has mentioned Vinevar to see how I will take it."

"One must live," said Kanéuji, "as the bird flies. If it wants to fly south, it flies south."

When they reached Kanéuji's rooms, they were still arguing.

"All men are my brothers," said Kanéuji, "and in woman I find no attraction."

Vacla saw his opening.

"If all men are your brothers, then just what did you have against me?" he asked.

"You believe that I had something against you?"

"How can I help it?"

Kanéuji shook his head. "I live like a bird," he said gravely. "I know that the cold will come and that I must go south, but I am sometimes forced to vary my route, not because there is any doubt of the destination, but because of circumstances which may arise."

Thinking he was playing with him, Vacla rounded on him.

"You must make a clean breast of it," he muttered. "Why did you betray me? You wanted information. I gave it. Why did you sell me back to Vinevar?"

Vacla's face looked ghastly in its excitement. Kanéuji was expressionless as though his face was made of papier maché. One would have said that he did not hear, he sat so motionless, so unperturbed.

Erect and resolute Vacla attacked him.

"I sold you the secrets of the Jews," he said. "I told you about the extent and price of the cotton lands. I told you and put you in touch with the agents who were to negotiate the deed. For this information you gave me a piece of jade and a promise of a percentage for ten years on all production resulting from this transaction. What follows? I am betrayed by my servant a man of your race, who allows Vinevar to surprise me, and I am allowed not only to appear the uttermost fool, but put in such a position, that Vinevar threatens that if I do not disappear from his horizon absolutely, he will utterly and publicly ruin me. So I sell my belongings and disappear."

"Yes," said Kanéuji, "yes."

"I have sought this interview that I might force you to tell me what you mean. What is the meaning of this change of attitude on your part? Like a phantom I vanish in the night. Like an outcast I disappear. Other men sell

secrets. Other men, what we call, give the goods away. It is not honourable, but it is profitable. They do it and are not ruined. Why am I alone forced to abandon my position? What do you mean?"

As Vacla talked, Kanéuji looked like a Buddha, full of wisdom and strange secrets and expressionless.

"Why," repeated Vacla, "am I brought to such a pass? I have been thinking it over, and the punishment is out of proportion to what I have done."

Kanéuji still preserved an Oriental stillness, as Vacla talked on like a child with hurt pride. Amid this stillness, this philosophic indifference, Vacla asked again, "Why have you brought me to this pass?"

"It is not I," said Kanéuji at last, "who has brought you to this. It is the bugbear of America. You have bent to it like a reed to the wind."

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Vacla, "what is the bugbear of America?"

"The Gentile fear of the power of the Jew," answered Kanéuji. "Vinevar has bewitched you. You are afraid of his shadow."

"The Jews are clever, we are cleverer."

Whatever shall thwart us at the beginning, we shall surely triumph at last."

"But you sold me," interrupted Vacla, "you told Vinevar, how else could he have known?"

"In the pathway of life are steep and difficult places," said Kanéuji. "I let you be taken in that trap, because it was impossible for us to make use of the information you gave me. The Jews are too strong. When we found it impossible to make use of the information, your Japanese servant was allowed to take a bribe and surprise you. Japan wants seemingly to hold no information that she is not using. We pick from the brains of the Oriental and the European alike. In half a century we will astonish the world, we with our vast doctrine of Buddhist impermanency. The sun and the moon will perish. In the beginning things were fixed, in the end they separate. Sakra with all his attendants will disappear. All life inherits the quality of dissolution, but in spite of the unstable, impermanent, disintegrating qualities of life, Japan will make her claim for place among the nations. And in every bid that we make to undersell the artisans of the Occident, is the sorrow and the patience of Japan."

Kanéuji's eyes closed for a moment, then he resumed:

“Japanese trade is operated by a clique as exclusive and as strong as that of the Jews. To show you, a British firm brought a suit against a Japanese firm in a Japanese court. It won. A judgment of a large sum. The Japanese firm expressed itself ready to pay, but the Japanese guild told the triumphant English firm, that in case it forced payment, it would be boycotted in the industrial centres of Europe in such a manner that ruin would be inevitable. We use the boycott. The Jews use, too, the boycott. The individual seeks to escape from his thralldom by exceptional qualities. He tries to win financial independence, and he must be exceptional in his qualifications, because thousands of others are seeking to do the same. The nations too are seeking each of them to take first place. And those nations who have achieved are those nations whose integral parts work together. In its loyalty to its own Race-Soul, you have the secret of the strength of Jewish power. The Japanese looks upon this life as the resting-place of a traveller journeying. So although we know that the traveller must leave the resting-place, we do what we

can for our country while we are here. The follower of Buddha knows nothing of his former lives, or of his future lives, but of his former lives his instinct tells him, that even for a thousand times a thousand shall he be forced to face a weakness in his character until he shall have overcome it. There is no escape from the supreme necessity of service to the race. The unhappy spirits do not attract our attention. Emptiness, they are but emptiness, but the great man attracts, his evolutions are finished and he will return to this earth no more. The pride of self is broken down and the Ego is merged into the Cosmos. Japan is great with the greatness of Japan."

Seeing that Vacla listened with great attention, Kanéuji became more personal.

"By the force of Karma, Melfort, you will learn. Your life has been caught on the edge of the vortex, like the lives of millions of others, and is predetermined by the influence of Karma."

"These men," thought Vacla, "think I am not capable of understanding what they understand, but I am beginning to understand the mechanism, the wheels within wheels."

"Some of that is rubbish," said Vacla. "I suppose a man can't see his way clear."

Kanéuji shook his head.

"The way is nothing," he said. "The way does not matter. The destination is what counts. Man moves along an endless road."

Vacla looked hard at Kanéuji and replied angrily, "With your trickery you have upset me, got me to such a pass, that I have no way at all."

"I plotted against you," answered Kanéuji, slowly, "but it was your fear of Vinevar's power that made you do as he said. No water comes into the boat, if there is no hole."

In listening to the expressionless quiet of this little man, Vacla was convinced that he had acted the part of a scared fool. In an awkward way he had tried to find out what had been the Japanese idea in throwing him over. He gathered that he had been used as a pawn. He noted mechanically, that Kanéuji had changed his position, was in fact watching him intently. It was a scene, however, that Vacla had never rehearsed. A kind of defensive irony welled up in him, still he noted Kanéuji's changed position. Prudently the Oriental spoke.

"Well, Melfort?" an enigmatic smile curled

his lips, "we are," said Kanéuji, "a nation whose foreign trade has grown entirely without a corresponding capital, and yet—our success has not caused us to forget what possibilities change may have. I mean in the manner of employing new tools, new weapons. I think," said Kanéuji slowly, "we might use a new tool."

Vacla pricked up his ears.

Kanéuji continued in a languid, patronising manner.

"Human life is composite. The soul is a compound. Never, though, do its elements combine twice in the same way. Business combinations, too, it is sometimes necessary to vary. I think that we might use a new tool."

When Vinevar made a proposition little brown devils danced in his eyes. Not so Kanéuji. His features seemed immovable. Vacla's expression had changed. It was furtive, expectant.

"Look here," said Vacla becoming excited. "You tricked me. Perhaps you have ruined my whole life. Pray don't be offended, but I think if there is anything you can do to make matters better, then you ought to make things

better for me. Have you a position to offer anyone?"

"Perhaps," answered Kanéuji slowly.

"You have something to offer?"

"Perhaps."

"Then offer it to me." In a moment Vacla's life seemed to have undergone a complete change.

"What is it?" he asked trying to become less serious. It meant so much to him, he dared not show his real feelings.

"Truly," answered Kanéuji, "I have something, but it is not yet."

"I must live," protested Vacla, "in the meantime."

Kanéuji nodded his head.

"I think," he began in his dry, uninteresting voice, "you can live if you sell the jade Buddha. Already I have had an enquiry. Duveen? No. But a collector, a man of taste is anxious to possess it. This is a remarkable piece. Through the august influence of the god of the temple I was allowed to bring this Buddha out of Japan, that it might work for Japan, that it might be sold for the benefit of her people. Within sight of Fiji no yama is a temple with an empty place, the place for-

merly occupied by the Buddha. Although if I had chosen a god to bring to Mr. Melfort, it would have been Daikoka, the popular god of wealth."

"Man cannot be above life," interrupted Vacla. "I must live."

"Yes, yes. With the price of the talisman you will live until you have orders to report to Tokio. You will live and you will learn, although now you worship Daikoka, that it is not the Ego which passes to Nirvana, but the divine in each being—the Great Self-without-Selfishness. You will live, you will sell the God of Japan, and you will learn."

Vacla left the queer little man who talked in monotonous with a dry uninteresting voice, feeling that his dream could scarcely be surpassed.

CHAPTER XXXVII

VACLA walked home like a man awakened from a dream. A misty radiance hung over Central Park; the birds hopped and ran along the ground, as he made his way home his hands deep in his pockets.

"I've been no end of a fool," he said to himself. "I've been no end of a fool."

He was awakened from the clutch of Dai-koka. He had been drawn into the vortex obsessed by it, but now he was free. He had pulled himself out. Moreover, he had another chance of a career with influence to back him. He disliked Vinevar as one always dislikes those whom one has injured, but even in his dislike he could not underrate him. He was a great man. He could count them on the fingers of one hand, the great men he had met, and Vinevar was one. Kanéuji was a personality, but Vinevar was great. He thought how strange it would be to marry a woman of some Eastern race and pierce through the different customs, manners, habits to the emotions.

Surely the emotions must be the same, and yet are they? Song is the outcome of some emotion, some feeling trying to express itself, and the songs of the East are often almost repellent to Western ears. No. Japan must be different not only in its thoughts, but in its feelings in the centres of its being. One reason more why each nation should support its own flag.

In Central Park the air was sweet with the scent of promise. The earth smelt like the furrows in the fields, that have been turned over to be sown again. A new year, a new sowing, a new growth, a new harvest; the freshness of life maintained by the race, the work, the energy of the race. The race was certainly moving on over an endless path, going over the horizon disappearing, but seed-time and harvest, the sowing and the reaping remained, were continued, carried on from one generation to another.

He saw a little boy in a straw hat trying roller skates flushed from a recent tumble, running to his mother to be comforted, and a gush of emotion from deep within his heart came over Vacla. He would never run to his mother again, never feel her hug him with that quick convulsive gesture she had. Adult life did not

hold that solace. That was over. He was severed from her. That phase of life was done with, that milestone gone. But there were new pages in the book, other things for which he had found no time.

It was the conglomerate life that smote Vacla. The little knots of people, the mothers and children, the brothers and sisters, the husbands and wives, the separate units of the herd. It was too much for him, the meaning of it got home, and he walked more quickly.

Kanéuji had told him to bring the jade to his office on the morrow. He would do that. Kanéuji had been confident of a good price. He knew the value of it. He would be so much the better able to dispose of it.

It was one of those strangely beautiful days of Spring. The air was pure and moist, as though the moisture would lubricate not only the physical, but the thoughtful side of life. And the throng moved in Central Park this way and that. A motor rolled past him with a man and a woman. Their faces were expressionless and contented. "We belong to each other," they seemed to say. "We need make no effort. We can take things easily."

Vacla was obsessed by his new thought.

There is the vortex and there is man, and sooner or later he is drawn in.

If a man leave father and mother and brother and sister, he may achieve some great idea. He may wander from the herd and the protection of the herd, and in the isolation of his loneliness he may achieve; but at nightfall, when the flowers have closed and the birds have folded their wings and tucked their heads away—at nightfall the time when families shelter together; at nightfall how will he feel?

In the deep dark stream of night, let those within the fold, whose lamps are lighted and whose blinds are drawn, think of those without. Let those within the safety and the protection of the herd give one thought to the individual who lives alone and battles in isolation through the darkness.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Not long after, acting upon a message from Kanéuji, Vinevar went to bargain with him for the acquisition of the jade Buddha.

Vinevar, the great Jew, the man accustomed to triumph, to get his way, had ever since he heard of its coming to America wanted the jade Buddha. In spite of his ceaseless activity, his astounding success, like most great men Vinevar retained some of the qualities of the child. And one quality was pride in his extraordinary collection of pictures and jade. Now his collection of jade, although remarkable, worthy perhaps of taking first place in America, nevertheless would be greatly enhanced, he knew, by the acquisition of this one large piece. So it was with anger that he had discovered the piece to be in Vacla's possession, because knowing the value of the piece and the religious nature of its reputation, he could not feel sure that even if he bought it in good faith from Vacla, that the Japanese

would not step in and request its return. He wanted to buy it, but he wanted to be sure nothing stood in the way of his being the real owner.

It seemed to him, as he made his way to see Kanéuji, that this was but another instance where fate played into his hand; where if he desired a possession circumstances combined to make it his.

Vinevar dangled his eyeglasses on his ribbon.

Kanéuji, immovable of countenance, motioned to a chair.

Obedient to an instinctive distaste to being guided in any manner even to the small matter of choosing a chair, Vinevar hesitated, then he seated himself. For a moment his features were controlled by his usual scornful smile.

"The Buddha," he said presently.

"Is for sale," answered the Japanese, "not in the open market, but a collector, not Duveen, but a man of taste is after it. Knowing Mr. Vinevar's predilection for jade, I make my offer to him first, I give him first chance."

Vinevar smiled like a man who gets his way.

"The young Gentile—it was his."

"Ah, yes, but he is not so fortunate. He needs money, he must sell. You and I—old

heads. We can laugh together. He took me in. I was to receive precious information. We can laugh together, because the information is of no use to Japan."

Vinevar narrowed his eyes.

"It is of no use to Japan. But I feel guilty. The young man needs money, so I sell for him. The young man thinks I tricked him. It is I who am tricked, trying to find wisdom for Japan. But to help the young man I will sell for him the beautiful jade Buddha."

"That is an expression we always use," said Vinevar, "when we sell. When we buy it is different."

Kanéuji paid no attention to this remark.

"If I set my mind on a thing," said Vinevar, "it is always offered to me."

"That may be. For the benefit of the young man I offer you the jade Buddha. It will round out your collection. Its price is high, but of that I fancy you will take no account. On the proceeds of this the young man will have to live."

"It is more than he deserves."

"Undoubtedly, you and I know that. We can put our heads together and laugh. What he sold me, I cannot make use of, therefore

what he sold affects you not at all. We can put our heads together and laugh, but I will sell the Buddha and you will buy, and the young man will benefit."

Vinevar was convinced, convinced that the Buddha would be lawfully his, convinced too that it would round out his collection. Every fibre within quivered, his hand trembled as he felt in his breast pocket for his cheque book, he was indeed still showing the qualities of a child.

"You will have to pay me a very beautiful price for it," said Kanéuji with a shrewd wink. "There isn't another idol like it in the country."

"I will pay," answered Vinevar, and the words seemed to cheer him, to give him a sensation of the power of his own wealth, "I will pay."

"In the name of Daikoka twenty thousand."

"Ten thousand."

"No. I say twenty thousand in the name of Daikoka."

More detailed account of the transaction might be given, the phenomenon which made such a transaction so easily possible. Perhaps the scorn of the Oriental for all things of the Occident made the acceptance and terms of

sale and barter a thing more quickly settled than one would have supposed.

"Fate would have it so," said Vinevar aloud as he signed the cheque.

"All conditions are determined by Karma," answered Kanéuji.

With his little burning eyes Vinevar devoured the Buddha. He had paid the price. It was his. He, the disillusioned one, had come on a desire, a wish, and he had gratified it. He felt the power of himself even in small things. He rose and prepared to go.

"What a man of mechanism," he thought looking at Kanéuji. "So cut and dried, acting always on given lines. The Japanese have not our subtlety. They are more stereotyped."

As the door closed behind Vinevar, Kanéuji spoke out loud to himself. He looked at the cheque he was holding in his hand and he spoke: "We give something and we get something, then in the province of Sagami it is finished."

Even as he spoke he showed no excitement, no anger, no concentrated feeling, and yet the words he spoke were these: "Does the West suppose that we of the great City of Temples rob our temples? Does the West suppose that

the ancient people of Japan rob these temples of their gods to sell them to the Occident? To the spirits in our temples, many of our festivals are commemorated. Would we then rob the temples of those gods? Surely the august spirit may well rejoice, that under the tiled line of a horned roof still lives the jade Buddha of Fiji no yama."

Kanéuji blinked his eyes.

The jade Buddha bought by Vinevar was but a duplicate.

CHAPTER XXXIX

HAVE you ever stood on a hill in springtime, early springtime, on a hill that overlooks the bend of a river that the winter has covered with ice? Have you stood at the beginning of the ice break and watched the pieces pile themselves one on top of another, until after a time a break appears, that reveals the dark stream of the flowing river beneath? This takes place in northern climates in the life of every year. It takes place morally and sentimentally in the life of a great many human beings.

There comes a time when the ice is broken, when the conventional habits, the sentimental ties, the ambitious hopes are broken, and they pile one upon another and reveal the dark streams of existence flowing beneath. It is a cataclysm, but a cataclysm of value, of great, far-reaching value.

The ice had broken. Conventional habit and ambition were broken and the dark stream was revealed.

Ten thousand, thought Vacla to himself, was

ten thousand, but it was no more. He knew it would carry him for a time, and he had great faith in Kanéuji, although the scheme which had wrecked him would not now go through, and he could not hope for a percentage.

But Vacla was sick of money, sick to death of finance, and he wanted to get away to the woods, to the sound of the birds in the trees, and the call of the robins after the rain. He wanted to shake free of the city and his own disgust, to free himself of his despairing mood, for it had become clear to him that so far his life had failed, and failed not only in its achievements, but in its vision.

Art needs care, but life for the most part looks after itself. In art as in society, there is the shyness of human beings who are gathered together, the unnatural stimulus of an accumulated detail for a scene; but nature is unpremeditated and free, taking the life which she finds, giving often in return a great and surpassing repose.

So as the shadow over his life was dispensed, Vacla thought with longing of the woods, of the streams that trickle musically over twigs and dead brown leaves, of the green places where the twin-bells have spread their vines

over the moss, of the white-throated thrush which people have named the Canada bird, the bird that calls in the month of June when the sun is going down. For there are few places in the world that have more to give to those who seek their refuge than the wild Canadian woods.

The spring comes later in Canada than in the United States, even in the province of Quebec patches of snow are often seen on the Laurentian hills until June, but the last preparations are hasty, the strong sun finds them and they disappear into the earth, or find their way into the trickling streams. To the crowded complexity of New York life, nothing could be of greater contrast than the great woods where here and there sparse trees admit the sunlight making bright patches in the engulfing darkness. Outside the forest the sky takes on paler tints, and in the clearings near the forest border, at evening, one may see smoke arising from the chimneys of the chaumières, the hamlets, the small houses with their pointed shingled roofs with a chimney at one end and a window on either side of the door, little houses such as children make with their pencils before they have learned to draw. There is something

rugged about the province of Quebec and it has an attraction, like the attraction of those reluctant human beings, who free themselves with difficulty from conventionality. With difficulty man surprises its secrets, it gives of itself reluctantly, but those who in adolescence have watched the ice going down the river, have seen the ground pink with wild laurel, have gone forth with tin pails to pick the ripening blueberries, or watched the wild duck flying along the shore, those boys or girls will always return on a happier later day to this vast big empty country.

Vacla in New York knew that soon circles would be appearing on the lakes where the trout had risen; appearing and vanishing in the modest tranquil life of the wilds; and a home sickness came over him for the yellow sand and the gravel and the brown waters of a lake that he knew. The wish grew in his heart to return to all that he had known, and to give a permanence to those memories in reliving and renewing them. Very rarely in life can a sensation be repeated. Very rarely can one stand at evening under the pines listening to the lake lapping on the shore and feel again as one may have felt once, a renewal of some

exaltation. "I found," said Swinburne in the "Ballad of Life," "in dreams a place of wind and flowers." The passing quality of life is that the "place of wind and flowers" remains but the dream, the quality of enchantment perishes, and is gone.

Return to the dream places of childhood but do not expect too much.

Vacla determined to go back to Canada in the time of waiting for Kanéuji to move. He decided to travel by the day train. And on the day of his departure, it struck him singularly, that no one came to see him off. There was no one, in spite of all the time that he had spent in New York, upon whom he should have called before leaving. He would have liked to go to look up Isaacson once again, but as Isaacson had never been near him, he gathered that Isaacson probably had no wish to see him. And so as he tore himself loose from the life he had been leading, there was no one to whom he must say "goodbye."

In the train, after first making a scrutiny of his fellow passengers, he took to looking out of the window, watching first the boats on the Hudson, then the shifting outline of the White Mountains, or the clouds of steam from his own

engine blown towards him by a contrary wind. And as he watched the clouds of steam, he thought for the first time for many a long day of Natalie, and in a strange way it seemed that his own reverses made him feel more tender towards her, as he realized the narrow outlet and the cramped attitude of her life. The more he thought of it the more he realized that this life of hers was simple and commonplace. Yes, it must be very tedious and boring. He lowered his eyes to the fields through which they were passing, and forgot Natalie for the moment.

But he was not to forget her for long. In the afternoon a newsboy passed through the train with some Canadian papers. Vacla bought a paper and after reading the financial column, the foreign news and the sporting page, turned to the social column. His eye travelled idly down until it was arrested by Natalie's name. He read that owing to the serious illness of her Aunt, that her wedding to Mr. Curtis Browne, which was to have taken place in June, had been postponed. So she was really engaged, really on the eve of marriage! That was interesting. Although as yet her personality had not caught the depths of his, the

fact that she was going to marry another man piqued him tremendously.

As the train passed along the shore of the Lake, he made up his mind that when he arrived he would call upon her. Her attraction for him had always been as if her attention, her ego, her interest dwelt below the surface, and he had to be constantly calling these things up, constantly summoning them, for if he did not hold them, they would sink away again out of sight. So far he had rather had a surface admiration for her than an arresting attraction. Still he must have thought more of her than appeared to himself. She was not one of the type of the passionate wreckers of men, the strong type of woman which takes what it wants and has the power of taking. Still there was this lure in her, this something that forced whoever was with her to try to make it appear again.

The thought was gradually formed that he would go to see her. It was characteristic of his dominant nature that Curtis Browne did not occur to him as a real barrier. Probably it was a case of any port in a storm with her, and she had chosen Curtis Browne as a possible means of escape. Vacla felt that fact as a bond

between them. They were both trying to escape from something they had known. His old adventurous spirit woke in him, and at that moment he knew that he would try to win her for himself. A strange reflection occurred to him that he had no doubt of victory. She was not capable of achieving freedom for herself. Young girls brought up by conventional great aunts are not, their timidity has been tremendously fostered. He could give her freedom.

About seven o'clock in the evening the train ran into the station, and Vacla following a porter who was carrying his bags, got into a cab and drove to the hotel.

CHAPTER XL

THE thought of the future makes a man powerful. There is more than to-day, there is to-morrow. The uncreated may be created, the unfulfilled, fulfilled, little faces peep out of the clouds.

Vacla lay on his back in his blue pyjamas and took the telephone from the bed table, and the sounds of the trains rattling into the station, of the noises of the town, came in through the window. He took up the telephone and rang up Natalie's number and when she came, he told her who it was and waited for her to speak.

"When did you come?" she asked, and went on to say that her Aunt was ill, very ill.

"Aren't you going to see me to-day?" he called. The telephone connection was not very clear. He began to enjoy himself, to be triumphant. He tried to detain her though she seemed anxious to go. At last he got a promise, that she would meet him at three o'clock. He sprang out of bed and went into the bathroom

and turned on the taps, and as he sharpened his razor, he whistled a little tune. The water roaring into the bath was an accompaniment. He tried to whistle something that would use it as a background. He saw himself in the square mirror, his hair sticking out like a nimbus. His eyes regarded his features, and their gaze dropped to his chin which was powerful and strong.

"I'll get her," he said calmly, as if her will were not of the slightest account. Over the telephone he had felt the quality in her that appealed to him, the quality in her that slipped away when he did not try to hold her, the ego in her that seemed to seek retirement.

He slipped off his pyjamas and hung them over the hook on the back of the door. Then he let himself down into the warm soft water. He took the paper cover off the soap and flicked the soap along the top of the water. It floated. Then he took it in his hand and began to make a lather over his head. He had the whole morning in which to dress, so he took his time. He put on his clothes remarkably well, wearing them with an easy carelessness that was almost English. He knew the value of a first impression, and his clothes were of the

best. Although he loved money, it was because he loved spending, not hoarding it. He felt triumphant, the conqueror, sure of victory.

But that afternoon when he met Natalie and saw her pale face and the intent, far-away look in her eyes, as they rested on him, he was touched with a new feeling for her, because in spite of her gaze she seemed to remain neutral. At the touch of his hand, her eyes met his, as if there was a secret understanding between them.

"Shall we go for a walk?" he asked. And not waiting for her answer, he stepped beside her. "Come along," he said, "we'll go and see if anyone has cut away the names that we printed on the steps."

Natalie would have hesitated to remind him of it. Men had such different standards, little valueless things mean more to women. She remembered quite well the day they had cut their names with a penknife on the steps leading up to the mountain slope. "*Natalie and Vacla.*"

"Don't you remember?" asked Vacla.

She laughed slightly with self-consciousness.

"O! yes I do."

"There you are," he said suddenly, "just as

fickle as all your sisters. You had forgotten all about it." He turned and looked at her. "Why are you always sad?" he asked her.

"Sad!" she exclaimed, looking round at him.

"Yes," he said, "you are always sad."

"How can I help it?" she answered, low and intense. "I am always with the Great Aunts. I am young, but they make me old. I want to be like other girls. I want to be thoughtless and not forever thinking how I am behaving. I want my chance."

"You'll get your chance, don't fear. Everybody does."

"Do you really think so?"

"I know it."

Up on the steps they sat down, side by side, to rest; Natalie with her brown-gloved, nervous hands clasped over her knee. She was wearing a coat and skirt of dark blue serge, and the white, turned-down collar of her blouse suited her. Vacla took the hand nearest him. "Are you glad I've come back?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, but she moved restlessly. There was a dark, strained look in her eyes. She took no comfort from him. She was denying the deeps in herself and they were rising. She was dreaming her young dream. Vacla

watched her; the sweep of her eyelashes as she moved her eyes. They were discovering each other.

"You want a refuge," he said, "a destination."

Then he drew away a little to get a better look at her, and the next moment he put his arm around her.

"No," said Natalie drawing away, "you mustn't do that." And yet in spite of her rebuff, there was gentleness in her words.

"Why mustn't I? You must know I am fond of you," he said simply.

For a fraction of a minute they had come close to each other, with her next remark she thrust him away.

"I am engaged to Curtis Browne."

"Yes," he said, "I heard that, but it is not true. You do not want it?"

Natalie started. "I," she said, "what I want is to be happy, to be left alone."

As she said this there was a strange longing in Vacla's face, as if what had been begun half as a game had become in danger of being in earnest. Was it the hint to the male of another male in pursuit of the quarry? Was it the thought that the conquest might not be his that

made it more desirable? These riddles he did not ask himself. If Natalie had been more versed in affairs of the heart she would have smiled to herself and known, that suddenly out of a flirtation had sprung something that bade fair to be real. There are some men born to defend lost causes, they marry wives who are grateful for their protection and care; but the woman with ideals, with the orthodox feeling for home and all that home means, would never have caught Vacla with that bait alone. In his dream of vulgar satisfaction in the preposterous expenditure of money, if he had pictured a mate at all it was one who would attract him and hold him by the wonder and admiration that she roused, more than by her worth, unselfishness, or work for others. When two natures come together, the stronger eventually dominates the weaker. There may be mutual sympathy, there is never mutual independence. In the course of time, the vine will be found leaning upon the oak.

"You want a refuge, a destination," repeated Vacla. "All women do. Sometimes men do. I understand you better than when I was here before. There has been lots of water under the bridge since then. I under-

stand better. You want to escape. You don't know to what, but you want to escape."

Natalie's hand tightened in his. How often during her engagement to Curtis Browne she had wished that he would look at things from her point of view, that just once, even over some trivial object, he would put himself in her place and see things with her eyes. She felt that if he would do this, some barrier that was between them would fall, some door in her would open to him of its own accord. And then she was wont to console herself, that after marriage he would be more understanding, more seeing, not knowing that what a man is before marriage he will be afterwards. It takes such a wonderful woman to make the leopard change his spots.

Vacla's strong fingers closed more tightly on hers.

"You must break with this man," he said after a pause. "You must not marry him without love, trusting that he will give you any happiness; lift you to any new sensation, because he won't. I know about that. My mother never loved my father. She married him to get away from home. Like many Russians she played the piano wonderfully, and

she always said that when her feelings were too strong for her, she put them into sound, and the wind carried them away. Even children have their intuitions. I knew that something was lacking to her, even then; something that women feel they have a right to expect, and that life does them out of sometimes. Such a woman's children feel it in her touch."

Natalie's fingers twitched, almost imperceptibly.

"It is a hunger that if it is to go unsatisfied would have been better left asleep. It is the unsatisfied emotion that has made some of the music of the world."

Behind them they heard the footsteps of some people coming down the steps. Hastily they drew apart. When they had passed Vacla went on with the conversation, but Natalie sat with her hands clasped together on her knee saying nothing, within her eyes an expression of vague alarm. But as he talked on, as if thrilling to the sound of his words, her cheek glowed and her nostrils dilated. It was as if the spring wind were in collusion with him, bringing her the scent of far-away apple-blossoms to steal from her her sense of law and order. For the boughs of apple-blossoms

swinging in the wind, and the swollen streams rushing down from the hills, are part of the formula of the young year, the formula that makes a light smoulder in the eyes of the young, that makes laughter gayer, and the step lighter. It is a process rather than a quality, but its results, its momentary results are unfailing. The sun begins to be hot; the birds are singing their courting songs; the fleecy clouds chase each other across the sky.

When Natalie and Vacla came down from the mountain, they both felt that things between them had changed.

CHAPTER XLI

VACLA put off his fishing trip, and under the smile of the Spring lingered on. He had dreaded going to call upon his uncle, fearing the questions that his uncle would have the right to ask about his business, but although he went to the first interview with a feeling of dread as to what account he would have to give of himself, it was quickly dispelled.

"Glad to see you, my boy!" said Uncle Nathan. "I've been making my will. Old Ebbing has been frightening me about my heart. There will be a good sum from insurance, some of it will be wanted to pay my death duties, but after that the remainder goes to Wyndham's boy."

The old uncle was so glad to see him, to have a chance to talk things over with him, that he hardly asked how he came to be there. Later, Vacla vouchsafed that he was there until Kanéuji sent for him to take up another job.

It ended by his leaving the hotel and going to stay with his Uncle Nathan.

He saw Natalie every day, and every day the strong quality of him softened to her. Every day brought him a fresh glimpse into her nature. He observed her dejection on certain days, and on casually touching on it, would soon trace the cause, to worry over Aunt Anne's physical weakness, or to her irritability, or some little incident of her domestic life.

"You are a funny kid," he said to her once. "Some days you are so cross with your aunt you never want to see her again, and yet if she is even the least little bit worse, you are so woe-begone."

"The Aunts are my home," she said with a little laugh, "and although I can't see life as they do, they have been good to me and I am fond of them."

In his new access of hunger for her good opinion, he had dropped the subject of her engagement, not venturing to approach it, as its mention seemed to bring all her worries upon her in full flight, and besides she had told him that the marriage had been postponed until September. Vacla had never in his life been so happy as he was now. He saw Natalie daily,

he sensed their intimacy growing stronger, his old uncle was glad to have him, and for the moment there was nothing for him to do but await the clearing of his prospects.

Once or twice Natalie met him before breakfast, early in the morning when the moisture from the night's mist was still upon the grass. Her face was very lovable to him. The curves of her lips he had studied daily and when they met on a neglected path in the early morning, it was almost instinct that made him bend and kiss her fresh and tempting mouth.

Natalie was taken by surprise. It was a definite act of dreadful disloyalty to Curtis Browne. She was surprised at him, but inwardly she was a little surprised at herself.

"Forgive me," pleaded Vacla humbly, in a manner to show the length of the way he had come. "I ought not to have done it, but you must come to a settlement, you must break off your engagement."

She slipped away from him and stood looking so white and worried that at once his heart smote him.

"I can't," she said. "Aunt Anne is so ill. They say any shock may carry her off."

To a young man with the least fire in him,

constant putting off is exasperating, but when Vacla saw Natalie's eyes begin to fill, he changed the subject.

"Don't worry, my darling," he said. "Everything will come right and it is a very bonnie morn." His reward was a smile through tears.

CHAPTER XLII

THE young year, riding to its full, shot her charm upon her votaries. When she could put Curtis out of her mind, Natalie was happy. Curtis who had gone a month earlier on his semi-annual business trip, Curtis the practical, but unavailing. She walked in brightness as one walks on thin ice that may at any moment give way. Curtis would return.

But it was not the premature return of Curtis that dropped a thunderbolt into their Eden. It was a telegram from Kanéuji which read: "Report to me in three weeks, and be ready to leave for Japan."

Vacla recalled the last days not with any maudlin sentimentality, but with a quiet earnestness. The walks, the talks, the growing knitting of young lives in a new intimacy. He compared his life with Natalie's, the brightness, the action, the brilliance, the travel. It was a good life. And Natalie, if he left her, how would she pass her days? Sink into the woe-begone attitude from which he was rousing her,

or else marry, escape to Curtis Browne. With Kanéuji's telegram still in his hand, he decided he dare not leave her, he would marry her and take her with him. Excitement woke in him. He did not deceive himself that it would be easy, but he decided to bear her down. He began to wonder about that part of her nature, which belonged to love. Was it ardent? Was it awake? Was it strong? A fire was kindled in him which burned up fiercely? He would get her and get her then.

When he met her he approached the subject at once. "I have got to go away. I must be sure of you. You must marry me secretly first."

Her dark, frightened eyes looked at him and then looked away.

"I can't," she said quietly.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Aunt Anne. Curtis. It is impossible. In time, but not now. It is impossible. I cannot."

"I will give you until to-morrow," said Vacla. "If you say No, I shall go away and never come back. You will be rid of me. Free for ever."

Her affection for Vacla was now the chief

impulse of Natalie's being. It carried her through her morning, her afternoon, her evening. She was docile, anxious to please, helpful at home, only because she thought of nothing but Vacla, counted the hours until she would see him again.

"I can't bear the thought of your going away and leaving me!" she said timidly.

"Then marry me and come with me. If you do not, all your fine sentiments are just words."

That hurt her and Vacla meant that it should.

CHAPTER XLIII

IN her Aunt's bedroom Natalie sat with a book in her lap. It was her practice after Aunt Anne had finished her morning toilette and had been put back to bed between clean sheets propped up by fresh clean pillows, to read to her until she fell asleep. That morning she had seemed weaker than usual, more fatigued and had fallen asleep almost as soon as she was back in bed.

Then Doctor Ebbing came to the door and motioned to Natalie, who tiptoed out of the room.

Natalie said: "I had better wake Aunt Anne, Doctor Ebbing. She would not like for you to go away without her seeing you."

The old Doctor took Natalie's ear between his finger and thumb. "Such a pale strained face!" he said. He had known her from a child.

"Doctor Ebbing," said Natalie seriously, a flush suffusing her face, "is Aunt Anne so ill that sudden news might kill her?"

Doctor Ebbing bent down gently. "My child," he said, "if anything is bothering your young head, better tell me, I knew your father and your grandmother, I have known you since you began to walk. Tell the old Doctor, my child, and in advising you I will think of everybody."

His kind tone made Natalie burst into a hysterical fit of weeping, and having once given way she could hardly stop.

"There, there!" he said. "Come to my office at half-past-two and we will talk this over. Tell your Aunt I will call again this afternoon."

When he was gone Natalie went back to her post to wait until Aunt Anne awoke. And as she sat there still and motionless, she made up her mind to consult Doctor Ebbing.

At two-twenty-five Doctor Ebbing was in his office, waiting for those who came to consult him there. There was a bell at his elbow, he touched it and a maid appeared.

"If a very young lady comes at two-thirty, don't show her into the waiting-room, show her straight in here, I shall see no one before."

"Yes, sir."

The Doctor took the book in which were

written the names of his patients to be called upon that afternoon. He had hardly glanced through it, when Natalie was shown in.

He placed her in an easy chair and talked to her for a few minutes about trivial things to set her at her ease. "Now," he said, "we must be squaring our accounts, settling this little trouble of yours, looking things in the face. Things are never so bad when you look them in the face. Is it about young Browne? Don't be afraid to tell me. I am as old as your father would be, and I wish to save you pain."

Natalie made a movement as if she found confession difficult. Dr. Ebbing helped her.

"From two or three reasons I am inclined to believe it is Melfort. He has come back. You are engaged to young Browne, and you wish to be free."

Natalie nodded. "I don't know what to do," she said with quivering lips, "you say any worry, or shock might kill Aunt Anne, and yet if I could only tell her and break off my engagement, I might marry Vacla and go to Japan."

Dr. Ebbing shaded his eyes with his hand. In them was a twinkle, the twinkle of old eyes at young troubles.

"Oh! what shall I do?"

Those words embodying all that was in her heart, were wrung from her.

"You are not in love with Curtis Browne."

"No."

"You are in love with Vacla."

"Yes."

"Your Aunt is set on your marriage to young Browne, and you are afraid of upsetting her?"

"Yes."

"Besides this, you have a wish to keep your word, because you have given it?"

"Yes."

"Well, properly speaking, you know nothing of life. Take the man you care for; no woman has anything to give to a man she does not love."

"But Aunt Anne."

Doctor Ebbing considered a minute.

"Whenever in my practice I have been asked to choose between consideration for the young, or the old, I have always chosen the young. The life of the old is over, the life of the young is just beginning, they ought to be given every chance. Your Aunt cannot give you a wedding now. Marry Vacla secretly and go with

him, and when you are gone I will break it to your Aunt myself."

"Oh! Doctor!"

"I think that is the best way out of it. Curtis Browne is away, you marry as your heart tells you, and don't worry about it. Your Aunt is a fine woman, but old-fashioned. She believes in stern discipline for the young. I think modern ideas prove her at fault. The young have need of an unbroken spirit to meet life freely and with confidence. The young bird kicked out of the nest must have no thought, that its wings may fail."

The bell sounded again in the hall announcing the arrival of another patient.

Natalie started. Something was rubbing against her knees. It was a wire-haired terrier. She stooped down to pat him.

"He is only allowed here, when friends are present," said Dr. Ebbing; "sometimes I don't know whether it is a friend, or a patient, but Tim always knows. Your troubles will pass, Tim knows it is all right with you."

Natalie felt happy on her way home. It seemed as if she had made a great deal about nothing. Of course, she couldn't marry Curtis, he was apart from her, separate. When

Vacla's hand took hers, it was not two hands, but one hand, two parts of one hand that had been separated and now were joined.

That night from her bedroom window Natalie gazed at the lights of the city. The stars were like diamonds set in a sapphire sky.

"Life," she said again to herself, "O! life, perhaps you really hold something for me!"

CHAPTER XLIV

ONE morning, two weeks later, Natalie took her seat on the rocking-chair beside Aunt Anne's bed. Aunt Anne had finished her morning toilette, she had put on her petunia silk dressing jacket, and she lay back supported by a pile of pillows.

"Shall I read you a chapter, Auntie?" asked Natalie. Aunt Anne's face looked thinner. The hair over her ears was very white, and the impression she gave was one of extreme frailty.

"No, child, I think this morning, you may read me a hymn. I feel very tired this morning."

Natalie gave her a wide, startled look.

"Can I do anything for you?"

Aunt Anne shook her head.

"It is cruel," Natalie thought. "I am going away this afternoon, and I can't say anything."

"You'll soon be better, Auntie," she said.

"The fine weather is coming and you will be

able to get out every day and get back your strength."

"Yes," said Aunt Anne. "To an invalid the two important things are nourishment and air."

Natalie looked at the thin transparent hand lying on the counterpane, and she thought how much the summer air must do. The waters of change were rising.

Late that afternoon Natalie peeped into her Aunt's room, "Are you awake, Auntie?"

There was no sound.

Natalie tiptoed in. She wore her blue serge suit and a small black satin hat. She looked at her Aunt. She saw the thin hand, the thin features pointed by illness, the hair over the temples gone so white, and a sob rose in her throat. Quickly she bent and laid her cheek against the eiderdown.

"Goodbye, dear," she whispered. "I can't tell you, because your generation is not my generation and between the generations is a great gulf. You don't understand me, and I don't understand you, but you did your best by me."

Aunt Anne stirred. The lingering beams of the afternoon sun lay on her bed, as Natalie

tiptoed softly out of the room. Then with a sort of excited terror, she went down the stairs, picked up her gloves and bag that were lying in the front hall, and went out of the front door. She knew that in one of the city churches, Vacla and his Uncle Nathan and Doctor Ebbing were waiting for her.

At six o'clock at the church door Dr. Ebbing met her, and with her hand on his arm, she walked up the aisle to where Uncle Nathan and Vacla were standing. Presently she saw that the clergyman was standing above them and had begun to speak.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony!"

Natalie remembered she had better take off her gloves.

"Duly considering the causes for which matrimony was ordained. First, it was ordained for the procreation of children. . . ."

The rector was old, he had lost some of his teeth and she could not hear him distinctly.

"Secondly; it was ordained for a remedy against sin. . . ."

She wondered why Vacla was so fidgetty. He couldn't be as nervous as she was.

"Thirdly; it was ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity."

Vacla pressed the outside of her arm with the outside of his arm. She felt he was collecting himself and trying to reassure her.

The clock upon the steeple struck the quarter of an hour.

In a kind of dream, she followed the rest of the service. In a kind of dream she took Vacla's arm when they went into the vestry to sign their names.

Then after a little conversation they drove to Uncle Nathan's where they had a hurried wedding breakfast, before driving to the station where they were to take the train to New York.

Doctor Ebbing and Uncle Nathan saw them off.

The train did not go until 8:10, and there were moments of desultory conversation.

The chimes of the cathedral clock rang eight. Its heavy boom reverberated under the dome of the station.

"The Aunts will be wondering why I am not coming home," said Natalie.

"I am going right up there now," reassured Dr. Ebbing.

"Good luck, my boy!" said Uncle Nathan.

"Long life and happiness!" said Dr. Ebbing and turning to Vacla he said. "There is enchantment for the disenchanted."

They heard the sound of an engine on the next track getting up steam.

CHAPTER XLV

WHEN they were alone Vacla closed the door of the drawing room and put his back against it. He looked at his tall slim bride; her features that had not lost the innocent expression that belongs to childhood. The curve of her young white throat, the droop of her dark eyes, betrayed the charm of youth.

"Well?" he said, and the tones of his voice were deep. "Well?" he repeated, and held out his arms.

Natalie turned to him, thought a moment, and fairly flung herself towards him. A tremor swept through Vacla under the suddenness of this surrender. It was the first time she had ever spontaneously come to him. A shiver of excitement ran through him. He stopped—and their young lips met.

Vacla put his arm around her. She threw herself back against him smiling into his face. Her metamorphosis seemed to be completed, her long-repressed nature had broken its bonds at last.

"Do you know what you are like?" he asked her looking down at her.

"No!"

"You are like a lily of the valley on a bending stem."

"Which means that you find me mushy?" she said laughing and leaning against him. "So I am. Take care. You are the chief man in all the books I have ever read."

"Silly!" said Vacla and kissed her again.

"I shall talk of what I like," she said wilfully.

They sat down on the green velvet cushion of the sofa. Vacla put his arm around her and they swayed together with the motion of the train, waiting for the customs man, the emigration man, and the thousand and one officials who come to disturb those who journey from Canada to the United States.

Later when he returned from smoking a pipe, he found her curled up, her bright hair which was a mixture of dark strands mixed with light tidied in a plait and lying on the pillow.

With a leaping thrill of tenderness Vacla picked her up and clasped her in his arms, his dark cheek against her fair one.

"I am not very heavy."

"No," he said, "you are light as a feather. I could carry you anywhere."

And when he lay beside her, she lifted her soft mouth to his to be kissed.

"Kisses in the snow," she reminded him. "Kisses in the snow."

"Assuagement," said Vacla to himself. "Assuagement."

The train was carrying them from the old life to the new, from the old environment, habits and customs, to a new environment, where old habits must change, old customs be modified and the personal prejudices of each be moulded to the taste of the other.

The old life was gone, done with, torn up like a piece of paper, and when the red dawn showed in the sky the new life was beginning.

Natalie lay with her head on Vacla's arm. Tired with the excitement, the emotion, the events of the day, her eyelids closed, for she was asleep. But long after Vacla felt her regular breathing, long after the light from a station lamp showed him that her eyes were closed, Vacla lay, the force of his emotions surging within him, staring into the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE sight of Vacla lying in bed in the morning, smoking his pipe, always gave Natalie a little gasp. She saw that he evidently did not think it at all out of the ordinary, so after expressing her surprise that he should smoke before he got up, she accepted it, as she learned by intuition to accept unquestionably many things that at first seemed strange to her.

She found him untidy, leaving his clothes, his books, his papers tumbled about the room, and it gave her a queer pleasure to follow his actions setting what he had upset in order.

She betrayed a certain naïve susceptibility to his most simple actions, and for a long time was extremely interested in his shaving. The smallest actions of life are of interest if committed by those we love.

To her observation Vacla always answered, "Silly," proceeding forthwith to pretend to cut his chin, whereat she flung a protest, and kissed his rough chin, getting soap on her own.

Great larks they had, over nothing at all.

They were lovers, but they were young lovers. They did not confide in each other like older people, they eyed each other like two young animals. They leapt to each other's arms.

Vacla had unparalleled opportunities of appreciating her. Knowledge of something kept her from doing what he fully expected. Her composure, her queer little independence gave him a heartache at times. He was surprised at her attitude, she took married life with such ease, such reticence, such reserve, almost without effort she stepped into being the companion by his side. Before he knew it, she was adapting herself to him, thinking of his habits, his point of view. There was an expression on her face at times like a young filly that rides hard at a five barred gate and takes it.

"Bless her!" said Vacla to himself, "she means to do her best by me."

There had been moments when he had prepared himself for the feminine prerogative, the asking of questions, the first night for instance when he not only came in late for dinner, but missed it entirely. Men hate being asked questions, in an absurd way, they hate giving an

account of themselves. Vacla arrived at half-past nine prepared to tell what had kept him, preposterously apologetic, but Natalie ran to the door, put her arm through his and squeezed it.

"It's awfully jolly you've come," she said. Not a word about his being late.

Vacla was too young to reason things out, but it was because she had accepted him as her mate, because she loved him that she fitted so easily into his life. When she handed him his cup, she gave it gently, with a movement that implied care for his comfort.

But though Vacla in his cooler moments deliberately paused and watched her, before he knew where he was, he was trusting her with his business secrets, talking things over with her, clearing his own mind by saying things out loud, taking her into his confidence. And very swiftly the effect of her innocence, her guilelessness made itself felt upon his tricky nature, and he saw that anything that was not perfectly honourable, perfectly sporting and fair would have to be kept from her, because she would have no toleration, no understanding of the devious.

His double dealing with Isaacson, his trick-

ery with Vinevar might never have happened if Natalie had been there. His was the strong nature that needs the complement of a feminine nature, the virile nature that needs a quiescent one. And yet, "I meant to have you," she said to him one day, "I meant to have you from the start. One does not choose with whom one will fall in love. Love comes. I would not have chosen you"—Vacla squeezed her soft round arm.

"Curtis would have been much surer, but not half so exciting," she added with a smile.

These were the lighter moments.

But sex is a dark thing, an unfathomable thing. Though easier mentioned between man and woman, than between man and man, nevertheless it holds its mysteries, its moods, which are hard to explain.

In the first flash of his triumphant passion Vacla was happy, gay, carried away by his emotion; but there came days when he doubted, days when he wondered if in her innocence, her ignorance, her youth, she could hold him against the storm and stress of life which he already knew. On those evenings he bent over her, pouring into her ear all the words that passion could find, or forge, trying to awake

in her some force that would stay him in the storms of life. For Vacla had a little, a tiny spark of the driving force of genius, the whip that lashes men on up the steeps of life and, what he wanted, what he needed, what he demanded from his mate, was that in his dark hours she should hold him by some light and golden thread.

Walking briskly through the streets of New York, driven by that hungry something that had pursued him all his life, in the lamplight, amidst the noise of the traffic, surrounded by the bustle of people, human beings with heart-aches just like his, Vacla asked:—"Will she hold me, keep me from straying where I should not go? Is she strong enough?" And from the night, the unrestful night of the city he got his answer. "Not by her strength, or her tenacity of purpose, will she hold you, but because being woman she is weaker than man, because of your chivalry and her need, because she awakens in you feelings that are good, because of these things, but more than all this because she is your woman to do with as you will, she will hold you against no matter what odds."

CHAPTER XLVII

AT the end of a June day, Natalie was waiting in their sitting room for Vacla to come home. She recalled her life with the Aunts. Already it was sinking out of sight, like land upon which one gazes back from the deck of a fast-going vessel. She recalled the thin figure of Aunt Anne, and the round, less aristocratic figure of Aunt Clara. She recalled the timid way they had of meeting life, and a strange feeling of compassion came over her, followed by a consciousness of her own safety with Vacla. When they came back from Japan, she would make Vacla help them with their little troubles. Vacla was kind really, he was just thoughtless. She would make him think.

From the doorway Vacla stood watching her and as he gazed, a rugged tenderness overspread his face, making it bright with its happiest expression. Natalie spied him and held up her forefinger.

"I felt you watching me," she said with a blush.

"What were you thinking of?"

"I have had a letter from Aunt Anne," Natalie replied. "She doesn't feel reconciled to you, but she has decided to forgive me. She feels now it is done, she might as well make the best of it."

"I am glad," Vacla said, looking into her face in amusement. "We leave for Japan in two days, and being forgiven will make you more contented."

In every movement, in every word, in every blessed look, as Natalie would say, she was happy.

"I am so proud of you," she said simply. "When we come back, you must be good to the Aunts and let them see you are not like anybody else."

And for answer Vacla gave her a reassuring hug, which she seemed to know how to interpret, because she rewarded him with a grateful glance.

CHAPTER XLVIII

So it was Kanéuji who flung open to Vacla the door of Japan. Japan whose past is a copy of the East and whose present is a copy of the West. The land of make-believe, of miniature gardens, and the clatter of clogs in her urban lanes. And partly it may be it was the charm that follows upon contrast, that affected Vacla, partly perhaps it was the softening quality of married life, that combined to give him a wiser outlook.

As Natalie put it, "One man alone in a small boat cannot take the world in forty minutes."

But just as some men triumph over the world without and succumb to the world within, Vacla's outward defeat had by contrary strengthened his inner world. Day by day he grew more appreciative of his beautiful, gentle wife, and day by day she gave him what his nature and his genius craved, an atmosphere of tender flattery and devotion. So that when black thoughts beat in upon his mind and strove to take their accustomed place, Natalie was there to dispel them with her presence.

Vacla had thought of Japan as the land of the tea-house and the geisha and the country of brilliant silks, but before he had been there very long, he sensed what he jotted down in his note-book "as a hidden disposition of national strength."

As his boat glided up the long channel of an inlet among the low hills, he and Natalie stood watching a fleet of sampans winding in among the little islands that Occidentals have learned to associate with Japanese screens. From the distance Nagasaki looked dingy, but they did not stop at Nagasaki, but travelled on by the Inland Sea to Kyoto, Yokohama and overland to Tckyo.

It was Kyoto that gave Vacla his real idea of Japan. It was a strange revelation to a western mind to see people waiting in the early morning by the margin of a pool for the lotus to open.

Tokyo he found noisy and smoky, and its forest of black chimneys and incessant shrieking of steam whistles reminded him of the purpose for which he had come. And that purpose was this: Kanéuji, a follower of Prince Ito, the Lincoln of Japan, had realized that cheap labour, the chief factor of success in competitive

trade, was for Japan a condition of the past. For this reason Vacla had been sent to Tokyo to go through certain factories and discover where the installation of American machinery could further cheapen Japanese production. Kanéuji, the deep thinker, knew that Vacla dare not fail.

When this study had been sufficiently exhaustive to enable him to settle upon certain concrete ideas, Vacla was to return to America and report upon the saving per yard, that could practically be effected by the installation of the proposed improvements.

And as he moved among these people, who have with such exact imitation adopted Western methods, he sensed always beneath the adopted exterior the Man of the East with his strange beliefs, his unintelligible thoughts. It was an American captain who awoke Japan. Would he have been wise to let her sleep?

So their year in Japan drifted by and the days detached themselves from the calendar like the cherry blossoms when the breeze blows them from the tree, until the momentous day came when far out at sea a liner bound for San Francisco carried a little note for the Aunts to say that Natalie's son was born.

That year had been a year of romance, a year in the land of make-believe. The autumn moon, the evening bells, the wild geese alighting at Katata, the arbours of wisteria, the plum trees, the matsu tree, the tiny waterfalls, the pools hidden in a wood, the gardens of fancy and the gardens of dreams, all contributed to a sense of unreality. Wandering in these strange unnatural gardens, they fell naturally into mutual confidence and knowledge of each other, until Japan herself came to be to them like one of her many bridges, that connect the banks of some tumbling stream.

Startled, enraptured with the strange terrific beauty, Natalie clung to Vacla and the days went by. The terror, the agony, the fear of dying in this strange land would possess her, to be dispelled by the coming of Vacla from his work, and then a terrible, wild happiness would take hold of her like a sensation that is too intense to endure.

So Vacla's son was born in a country where the worship of ancestors is rife; where the worship of family ancestors directs every act of a worshipper's life, where the ancestors sacred soul looks after family life. The Buddhist believes that once a year the spirits

of the dead return. A fire is lighted before the house on the evening of that day to guide the spirits home and on the fourth day another fire is lighted, "the farewell fire," to cheer them on their way. Those four days are full of marvellous memories, when the living feel the presence of the dead. Vacla's face was a blank when he heard of it, then, barely imperceptibly the thought crept on him. The beauty of it! If he believed it, it might bring back his adored mother to him. And the queer, half-mystic belief made its influence felt. Under the plum blossoms he sensed the strength of the Race as a Race. And he remembered the words of Kanéuji: "It is the great self without selfishness that enters Nirvana." He saw in imagination the dark multitude, prisoners to the instinct of the race continuing like a wind which has not yet spent its fury on its journey home.

"Are you sorry you came here?" he asked Natalie.

"No, I am not sorry, see what it has brought to me!" she said, exhibiting her son proudly in her arms. She lifted her face that he might kiss her. "I shall never forget it," she said. "In America I shall still see the plum blossoms." She seemed lost in consideration, then

she said, "I wonder what the baby will take back from Japan?"

Vacla answered after a little pause: "It's Race Ghost. That the dead never will leave the living. My father, I, the 'little fella,' the seen, the unseen, we are all going on."

His hand lay lightly on her arm, he was looking beyond, thinking of his mother, wondering if she could see "the little fella."

CHAPTER XLIX

A FEW weeks later a bystander watching the arrivals on the *Empress of Japan* at Vancouver might have seen a party of four. A man and a woman, Vacla and Natalie, a Japanese nurse wearing soft-soled shoes, carrying a small, but apparently precious bundle. The bundle was Vacla's son and heir born three months before. It was noticeable that although now comparatively old married people, Vacla still paid his wife great attention. In one hand he carried her dressing bag, in the other hand he held a bundle of shawls which are generally used in covering for members of the human race, that have only been one year, or perhaps two upon the earth.

The little party took themselves to the hotel where they were to await the next day's train to the East.

At the end of the afternoon Natalie went to tea with some people she had met on board ship, the Japanese nurse had also some appointment with a member of her own race, and

Vacla was left to watch the sleep of "the little fella."

He sank into one of the armchairs in the bedroom, from where he could watch the bundle in the middle of the bed. As he sat there, he thought how fate had woven his life into the ordinary lines of man's life. He remembered how he had wished to be iconoclastic, strong, virile, different, and he saw how he had come to domestic happiness and the gentle pride of parenthood.

Was he happy? Yes. Happy in his young wife, his love for her, and his infant son. He had a sense of good and evil, he believed in the existence of God and his own place in the endless chain. Fatherhood had given him a place. He recognized the tie of humanity in one generation to another. Love for him had taken the form of Natalie and "the little fella" on the bed.

He had felt long ago that he must grab what he could, take for himself; that the illusory ties of life could not endure, that the end was disunion. What had he made of himself? Nothing. Fate had made him. He thought of the personalities which had touched his life, Vinevar and Kanéuji, men of different

race, of different creed, both without personal ambition yet both caught up, transfigured by what they must do for their time. And involuntarily it came to him that that was the great and pitiless truth which until a man find he is naught. The truth of the divinely alone while partaking and contributing to the illimitable forces of his fellows. Fundamentally at last he perceived life's tragic and opposite poles, the loneliness and the fellowship that exists in a generation.

It was Sunday and the bell for evening church was ringing. He was going East the following day, but his little family went with him, they were his to care for, to cherish, to do with as he chose. That which the heart and the reason cry for was his. Let the bells for evensong ring on, let religion, the gentle habits, the significant sincerities of the people go on. They were the common actions and beliefs that bound them together, and according to the significance of what bound them together was the strength of the Herd—that mass of human souls travelling from darkness to darkness in our time, which we have been taught to call the Human Race.

CHAPTER L

WHEN Vacla returned to New York one of the first things he did was to go to see Isaacson. Often in Japan he had pictured that kindly heart, that tired face with its roving eye, and he felt he must right himself with Isaacson, and that if he could it would be like a gift of gentle happiness. Beyond Isaacson, like a portrait of a King by Velasquez stood Vinevar; Vinevar with his own vision of the world, his own hatred of this earth where men suffer so much. Vinevar would not be so easy to win. Still Vacla had a plan to win even Vinevar.

So he set out to see Isaacson with a kind of simmering excitement.

The room into which Vacla was shown was the living room which held Mrs. Isaacson's mahogany rocking-chair. Vacla watched the doorway as one watches a frame, that will suddenly receive a picture.

The portrait appeared in exactitude, wearing a flowered waistcoat, and carpet slippers.

The tired face lit up in a smile which instantly corrected itself.

"Don't interrupt me," said Vacla hastily, "until I have had time to make my explanation."

And Isaacson the simple-minded, lonely old man waited, feeling that in spite of appearance perhaps he had been valued.

He sat down and gently regarded Vacla.

"I have been sorry, sir," said Vacla, "really sorry."

"What makes you say so?" Isaacson stopped to ask.

"Because I think that I can now do something to prove it." He outlined briefly his year in Japan; his work for Kanéuji. At the end he added: "I have now the placing of large orders for machinery. I wish to do that through your office. If you place it with Vinevar's Steel Company, Vinevar may be led to forgive me."

By a curiously characteristic remark, Isaacson showed that it was not the order upon which Vacla was laying so much stress that was uppermost in his mind.

"You have followed my advice," he said, "you have been studying peoples. I tried to

show you what I took to be life. It was nothing to you. For yourself you have seen another kind of world. You have made an adventure. You have put thought into action. It is well. How could I foresee what you would do? Did I not see you gifted? Did I know that as a leaf detached from the tree falls to the ground, you would return to the fold? How could I know what you would do before?" Isaacson was moralizing out loud. "How could I know what you would do in those first hours of life, when the physical and mental run together at high pressure. What do we know about others? What they tell us by their words; their actions; their tastes. There is so much they do not tell us. The road of life is the great highway. Those who leave the highway must be brought back. We are all prisoners of the race, we may try to escape, to travel by some short cut, but we must return."

Vacla observing Isaacson as he talked, saw that the year had taken its toll. He looked more tired, more resigned. "I wanted to be different," Vacla remarked. "I wanted to strike out quickly for myself."

The old Jewish financier smiled at the idea of originality. "Different!" he exclaimed

scornfully. "You would offer your heart to the arrow. Our happiness is to be like everybody else. We are made to live in the race, as one family. Our happiness is in the race. When we escape it is like a fish trying to live in the air. Besides, there is no need to escape. Life is great enough as it is. Athens in the time of Pericles. New York in the time of Vinevar. It is enough."

The name of Vinevar brought back the question to Vacla which he spoke out loud.

"Will he forgive me?"

"Vinevar," said Isaacson slowly, "is an impersonal man. He has seen pitiable things, out of whose despair he can find no way, but in his green note book everything is noted down. And those things which bewilder and appal me are to Vinevar merely notes. If he ever wrote the book for which the notes are kept"—Isaacson left the sentence unfinished as if the mere reflection of such a thing were too painful to dwell upon.

"And you," said Vacla. "You will forgive me for being such a damned ass?"

Isaacson patted his bald head with his handkerchief. "Yes, yes," he said, "all will be as before."

Soon after, Vacla rose to go, but not until Isaacson had promised to pay a visit to Natalie and "the little fella." As he walked down Fifth Avenue to his hotel, it seemed as though life was supplying him with a key to the enigma of the people he passed. Money had been to him the symbol of every desire, the key of all earthly paradise. He had been wrong. Life held other treasures.

The sky that had been to him a sky of wind and flame had softened to the colour of the eyes of his boy. And his life which had been the sea beating against a rock, had grown quiet with the drowsiness of peace. He had come closer to nature, to the fundamental facts of the universe.

When he got back to the hotel, he found Natalie waiting for him in the sitting-room, and following his own train of thought that she had helped in his finding of himself, he took her face between his hands and kissed her several times. Natalie had known he hoped something from the interview with Isaacson. And she immediately tried to calm him, thinking his effusiveness meant that the interview had gone wrong. When at length she asked him, he

could not help replying with a smile at her naïveté.

"You were so demonstrative," she said, "I thought something was wrong."

They were interrupted by the nurse who came to say that the baby had fallen asleep and she was going to prepare his food. As Natalie followed her to give some instructions, Vacla went into the bedroom and looked down on the crib with wire sides that held his boy. At first he had been disappointed in him, in his feeling for him, he had expected some great sensation, that had not come, but after an attack of illness, when his anxiety as well as his curiosity had been aroused, he found that on the recession of danger, a new warmth had crept into his outlook. And the habit of tiptoeing in to look at the little downy head remained after the occasion for it had gone. He was beginning to love him.

"The little fella" stirred in his sleep. His hand jerkily shot forward and lay on the top of the blanket. Just so, Vacla's mother had often stood, looking down on him, wondering how life would come to him and how he would meet it. Just so, "the little fella" in his time

might some day be looking down on another small "morsel of the world."

Isaacson was right. Not to try to be different, but to go the way of all the world, brought the greatest happiness.

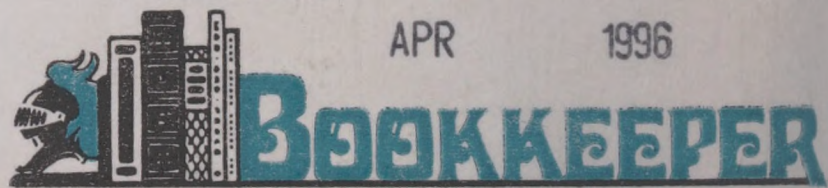
Vacla put his forefinger into the little open fist and clumsily the small fingers closed around it.

THE END

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date:

APR

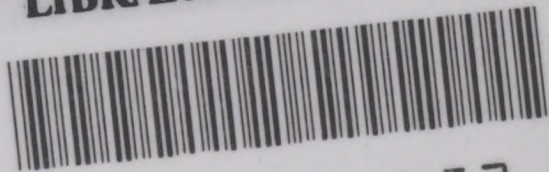
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